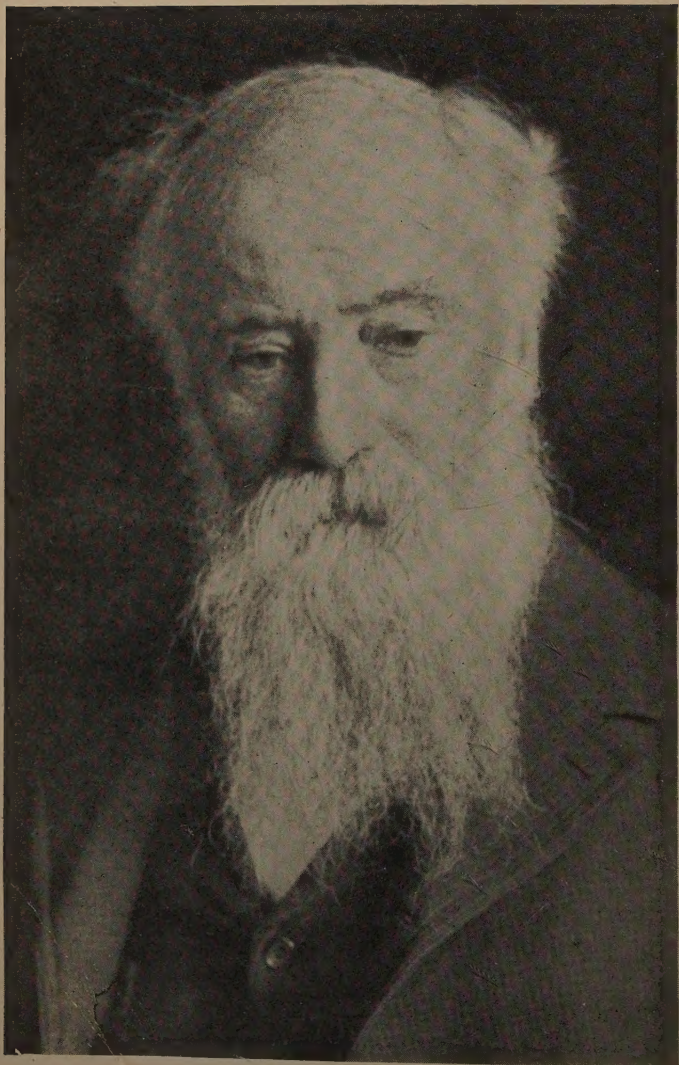


THE REAL
JOHN BURROUGHS



John Brewster

From an amateur photograph by Frederick W. Peabody of
Boston, Mass., taken about 1901

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THE REAL JOHN BURROUGHS

PERSONAL RECOLLECTION
AND
FRIENDLY ESTIMATE

BY
WILLIAM SLOANE KENNEDY

Author of "John G. Whittier," etc.

"Lover of all things alive,
Wonderer at all he meets."

—EMERSON



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Dedication

TO
A. E.

Recalling the deep generosity, the exquisite moral sense and accurate scholarship that have enriched the world. Recalling also the evening lamp, and Dante, Fogazzaro, Ibanez, and our motto, "*Contro i piu*" ("Against the many"), which is yet consistent with sympathy and affection for the humblest good soul alive. You and I, my comrade, have been contemporaries of the Victorian demigods,—Lincoln, Tolstoi, Carlyle, Browning, Whitman, Hugo, Emerson, Tennyson, Darwin, Spencer, Schopenhauer, Dickens, Hawthorne, Carducci. But now we hear it is actually become a term of reproach, with the high-sniffing fuglemen of the *vingtième siècle*, to have been a Victorian! *Risum teneatis amici?* And the infant Twentieth Century, with swelled head, asks us to admire its futurism, its cubism, its movies, its candy-sucking and wax-chewing, its wheel-wiggings, universal electric cackling, and general moral breakdown. But we hold to our faith in the human being, nevertheless,—in his future,—just as did John Burroughs. For, after all, in so many ways it is a wonderful Twentieth Century, this of ours.

"What best I see in thee

Is that . . .

Those prairie sovereigns of the West, Kansas,
Missouri,

Ohio's, Indiana's millions, comrades, farmers,
soldiers . . .

Were all so justified."

—WALT WHITMAN

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PREFACE

EVERYTHING about a man so intensely alive as was John Burroughs is interesting to his admirers. He once said to Hamlin Garland: "My life is not worth writing. Nothing ever happened to me." He meant nothing spectacular or of public character. Of course things did happen to him, many more than to less sharp-eyed and less sinewy-brained men, and these facts and ideas are what constitute his books. He wrote passages of his own life in these. But let us have all there is besides of collateral interest. All is of value as illustrating so vital and fascinating a personality. His character was as individual as old Pepys's. There is a singular intimacy in his pages. Incessantly he knocks at one's heart with his messages of good cheer. You carry him about with you, thinking, in the little vicissitudes of life, "Well, old John, wise and ware in worldly matters and in the turns and shifts of time, would not have blenched before this; he has been here before and bravely stormed this rampart. Coraggio!" To many, as with Bunyan, he has been the hand that came out of the darkness to give them healing leaves. He never quailed before the truth, but rowed with bow-

facing oars. And not only we, but the English and the Scots, will learn to know this man even more closely than they now do, as one of their classics, as a more subtle, antiseptic, and far-reaching intellectual force than their own nature-writers. He was a philosopher as well as a naturalist; kept in touch with the chief scientific work of his times. The universe is a much vaster affair for us of to-day than it was in Gilbert White's time, and so Burroughs of Riverby is of greater caliber than White of Selborne, and very different from him.

Burroughs has set down some autobiographical notes of his early life and some remarks on himself as a writer. Such things are always the most interesting part of a biography. And yet, as Professor Wilbur Cross, the biographer of Fielding and Sterne, shrewdly says (*Yale Review*, October, 1921):

"The view a man takes of himself, tho he has all the facts, must be partial and one-sided. . . . The incidents of his life, as he gives them, need to be supplemented, and the motives underlying his acts need to be canvassed by an outsider." Furthermore, says Professor Cross, "inevitably, psychological errors creep into the estimate that one member of a family forms of the others."

As Mr. Burroughs's posthumous autobiographical papers and other sketches of him appear, these remarks are more fully authenticated to those who knew the man.

John Burroughs's pleasant letters to me, appear-

ing in this volume, are used by permission of my friend, Dr. Clara Barrus, his literary executrix.

The frontispiece portrait is from an amateur photograph by Frederick W. Peabody, of Boston, Mass., taken about 1901, and given to me by Mr. Burroughs.

Robert G. Ingersoll wittily says of George Washington, "He is now only a steel engraving." There is a determined effort on the part of Burroughs's eulogizing friends and publishers to prettify him, to flatter the portrait. I am just as determined that they shan't. I would save him from the fate of Washington, Lincoln, and Roosevelt in this respect. I will draw his portrait now, before the camera obscura of memory falsifies the features by making them too delicate. So in my writing about him I have endeavored to portray the actual man in all his rugged sincerity, with fidelity to his own guiding life-principles, treating him judicially as he would have wished. As will be seen in one of his letters to me, herein reproduced, asking me to discuss some of his magazine work, he said, "I welcome honest criticism." I hope that the dash of friendly antiseptic criticism in my pages will also be welcomed by his friends. When he was in the fulness of his unspoiled manhood he would have scorned to take shelter behind a feminine or any other shield. Let us take him at his best. His work speaks for him, and the truth in it can not be injured. That foolishness of deifying him must now be dropped. For he himself has told most bravely of his lowly ori-

gin.* It was as abjectly humble as that of Abraham Lincoln or Henri Fabre. More honor to him, however, for the distance he left it behind. But as to origins and family, pray let us hear no more of it, seeing that human embryology and the story of evolution in general prove that there is not a family living on the globe to-day that if an ancestor of a mere bagatelle of ten thousand or twenty thousand years ago should appear at the back door would not telephone for the police and rush for a gun.

Out of what unlikely and obscure sources the splendor of genius sparkles forth from the noumenal into the phenomenal in this world, as if to mock our prescience and twit our science! Apparently the Soul, too, has its unimagined deeps of mysterious radio energy. But because one inexplicable Shakespeare has appeared we foolishly think there never can be another. Radio energy is only a faint symbol of the exhaustless power "rooted in the Mighty Heart." One Shakespeare only? There shall be myriads,—provided the world lasts as many more millions of eons as it has already existed.

W. S. K.

Belmont, *December, 1923.*

*In "My Boyhood" (Doubleday, Page & Co.), and "Burroughs Talks" (Houghton Mifflin Co.).

I

GENERAL TRAITS

THE REAL JOHN BURROUGHS

I

GENERAL TRAITS

CANNY old John Burroughs, the Ben Franklin of the farm, his wholesome homespun philosophy never out of date and relish. The studding- and sky-sails of his mind always set for any breeze that might send him on his way. And what seeing eyes and sensitive ears! A sinewy brain and most delicate moral nature; ever the best common sense on every topic; his "guid black prent" a savor and a tonic, a bugle-call of good cheer. An achromatic eye in his studies of nature and the universe. A physician who searched all our wounds and gave us good salves. In fine, after reading John you feel heartened up and are ready to say with Burns, "Stand out my shin!" You feel that his books are a night-latch to the ideal, as Gerald Lee says. Read one of his books on a rainy day, or any day, and when you have laid it down you feel as if you had a little better soul, were more of a man, enjoy life more, feel that it's better worth living.

In reading his country books one somehow thinks of what Æsop's country mouse set forth for the

delectation of the city mouse ("a reserve of delicate gray peas and bacon, a dish of fine oatmeal, some parings of new cheese, and, to crown all with a dessert, a remnant of a charming mellow apple")—so close to the heart of things are his essays. I think that if the army of nature-students he created could be put into line it would reach from Boston to the Hudson River, in double file. His style has the simplicity of his mind. It was found when his publishers engaged a lady to prepare portions of his writings for school use, that there was nothing to do but lift them from their setting into the new booklets.

John Burroughs was the typical American, and is accepted as such by all classes. While Whitman and Lincoln are also typical, yet perhaps the common man feels a certain aloofness, owing to the very grandeur of their characters. But John Burroughs had no such isolating grandeur. He sits close to the heart of the common man. You feel he could sympathize with you in everything, no matter how trivial; and he does. The average American looks askance upon a mere literary man. But a literatus who makes a good deal of money as a farmer and vineyardist commands their respect. They condone the literature in consideration of the dollars.

All of John Burroughs's books have the charm of the literary confession. They are a mass of poetized science ("nothing remarkable was ever accomplished in a prosaic mood," says Thoreau), observed facts passed through the alembic of an

interesting personality, to become literature on the printed page. His nature-books express the *joie de vivre* of the intelligent, healthy, outdoor man walking over his acres in the sunlight and the breeze.

He was not a man of city clubs, of the fellows with ridiculous swallowtails and white neckties. You could not conceive of him as caught in a situation where it was obligatory to clap a swallowtail on his back, any more than you could conceive of Lincoln or Whitman or Thoreau or Millet so conforming to the mob dictation. Your great outdoor man makes the swallow-tailed brigade surrender to him.

Burroughs's chief trait is sincerity. As he says, "only an honest book can live; only absolute sincerity can stand the test of time."

He was free of sentimentality; sought morosely the exact statement, so practical that he occasionally gets the laugh on the Emersonian fellows. For instance, when Emerson says that Thoreau was so familiar with the wild animals that he could take the fishes out of the water with his hands and pull the woodchuck out of his hole by the tail, Burroughs dryly remarks that he could do nothing that you or I could not do. As for the woodchuck, the trouble is to get hold of the tail; for he is pretty careful to keep his tail behind him! (John was an authority on woodchucks!) The farmer's boy, he says, does often pull a chuck from a stone wall by the tail, by the aid of the dog, but not from his hole in the ground.

The Concordians have to look sharp when Burroughs is after them about their natural history. But so does John himself. We are all vulnerable.

As with all original writers, Burroughs's personality freshens and vitalizes his material. To use again the hard-worked illustration of the bee, he adds something of himself to the nectar of the flower to form the honey. He is no mere stylist. He first has something to say, and then infuses it with central heat from his own soul. His style is limpid and sweet, like the flavor of a fine apple or a rich melon. It is the infusion of himself that interests us in his descriptions.

Unlike Thoreau, he was not in search of the transcendental, the mystical (the bay horse, the hound, the turtle-dove). He would describe only what the common man may see and handle, the obvious, the concrete; no suggestiveness whatever, no obscure half-lights, no half-tints, no veiled thoughts. As he says himself, "I am not a prowler, nor a burner of midnight oil, nor a lover of the spectral or of the obscure. I bring all things to the test of the sunlight; my mind works best, and my faith is strongest, when the day is waxing, not waning."

He said once he was a pessimist by night and an optimist by day. His books show none of the obscure, over-subtle, sophisticated, pseudo-profound diction of much current literary writing.

His unliterary environment he thought best suited to him; what little freshness and primal sweetness

his books contain was owing to his close association with unliterary folk. He thought that constant rubbing of heads together, as in the literary clubs, seemed to result in mental sterility. What he rubbed up against were real things, nature. His verbal or artificial memory was poor, but his mind had a magnetic or adhesive quality for what was properly his own.

It was in his nineteenth year that he first saw his thoughts in print ("An Egotistical Chapter"). In his early twenties he had begun to send "rude and crude" essays to magazines and New York weeklies. He was much helped by E. P. Whipple, he says, and by Thomas Wentworth Higginson, each "giving him a good send-off" in the art of producing essays on outdoor and indoor themes.

Being one day, when about twenty, in a Chicago bookstore, there, *stans pede in uno*, he opened and read a little for the first time in Emerson's Essays, and was so enthralled that he then and there bought the three volumes of the Essays and the Miscellanies. He read all summer in them, and a year or two afterward wrote his essay, "Expression."

"My debt to Emerson," he said about 1888, "is great: he helped me to better literary expression, he quickened my perception of the beautiful, he stimulated and fertilized my religious nature."

As for Thoreau, Burroughs admits that he (Thoreau) helped to confirm him in his own direction as a nature-writer. (I shall allude to this matter again.)

The style of the Naturalist of the Hudson was formed, he states, as the result of much study and discipline. He passed the crude fact of his observation through the alembic of his mind, he says; gave it the magic of written words. The true secret of his fascination is that he gets down to the real core of himself; speaks the exact and simple truth as he himself sees it. His sense of humor and love of reality, of the genuine, color his facts as he interprets them. "I must write from sympathy and love or not at all," he says. "My life has always been more or less detached from the life about me. My talent is a talent for green lanes and sequestered roadsides. I have loved the feel of the grass under my feet and the sound of the running streams. . . . The hum of the wind in the tree-tops has always been good music to me." In shunning the maelström of business and political strife and pursuing his way through the quiet fields he found life sweet and wholesome. All the turmoil of civilization exists that he and men like him may have a good roof over their heads and enjoy the beauty and glory of the universe. Civilization is not an end in itself.

He believes with many of us that the vulgar daily newspaper is not an unmixed good. He speaks of being blinded or deafened "with the dust and noise of the vulgar newspaper world," and thinks he was fortunate in his youth "in having escaped the daily paper, and especially the Sunday paper and the comic supplement" ("The Summit of the Years," p. 5). In his very last book ("The Last Harvest"),

he speaks in the same vein; says, "Probably the worst feature of our civilization is the daily paper" (p. 72).

He thanked Heaven that he never had to dissect Shakespeare or Milton, or any other great poet, in the classroom, and that he never had to dissect any animal in the laboratory (*ibid.*). In writing, he says, he wrote for himself, and did not have to ask, "What does the public want?" but what there was in his heart craving for expression.

Burroughs thought he had in him many of the qualities of a good soldier; but nullifies this statement by detailing how he went up one night to the firing-line before Washington, in the Civil War, and fraternized with the soldiers, but discovered that he much preferred the singing of birds to the singing of bullets! In fact, showed the shrinking timidity that nearly all green soldiers feel. "Later," he says, "I had sudden and vivid conviction that the stuff of a good soldier was not in me. . . . In the morning I made my way back to the city, satisfied that military glory was not in the line of my ambition" (*ibid.*). He told Clifton Johnson ("Talks") that he was also repelled by the hardship and the brutality with which the soldiers were herded up on trains like cattle.

It seemed to John that perhaps one reason women were his most enthusiastic readers was because he had the "feminine idiosyncrasy," as he expresses it.

He once said ("An Egotistical Chapter") that he

did not interview nature in the reporter fashion. I think his students may well dispute this. I know of no writer who so assiduously gathered up, treasured up, the last item of news in the world of nature as Burroughs did, unless it were Thoreau. Thoreau took down the doings of nature in shorthand, so to speak, with meticulous minuteness: Burroughs interviewed her and took only longhand notes, memory-notes. But he was certainly a reporter of nature if there ever were one. I think, too, no keen reader of his can swallow his assertion that he rarely took notes and had a very poor memory ("An Egotistical Chapter"). It is impossible that both these statements can be true, as the myriad of minute and special observations he makes on outdoor themes abundantly proves. In "Far and Near" (p. 164), he says, "I made this record in my note-book." The record is about a chippy feeding the young of a robin. In his account of the Alaska trip also he speaks of his note-books.

With Emerson, Burroughs found that "all his hurts a garden spade could heal." "The blue devils," he says, "can be hoed under in less than half an hour, and can not stand the bucksaw fifteen minutes." He goes on to narrate what supreme happiness he found in adding nine acres to the original nine at Riverby, subduing them to his hand, licking them into shape, planting them to choice currants, grapes, and raspberries. His health and spirits improved daily. He says:

"With what delight I saw this work go forward;

and I bore my part in it; I had not seen such electric April days for years; I had not sat down to dinner with such relish and satisfaction for the past decade; I had not seen the morning break with such anticipations since I was a boy. . . . I found the best way to see the Spring come was to be in the field at work. You are then in your proper place, and the genial influences steal in upon you and envelop you unawares. You glance up from your work and the landscape is suddenly brimming with beauty. . . . Out of the corners of your eyes, and by a kind of indirection, you see the subtle and renewing spirits of the season at work" ("Literary Values: The Secret of Happiness").

John o' Birds says all the best things in his life came to him unsought, but, he hopes, not unearned. He means, he says, that they were unexpected,—friends, travel, opportunity. He did not feel that fortune had driven sharp bargains with him. "I am not a disappointed man," he wrote. He was happy because he did not expect much at the start. So what came to him came as a pleasant surprise. He never sought wealth. He took thankfully what his toil brought him; but the cutthroat habits of the money-grubber were to him impossible. He wrote all his books, he says, for love, and only one for money, and that was a failure.* He lived the simple life and found it good. Loved to cut his own firewood, dip his pail in the spring, build his own house,

*I guess this one was his repertorial brochure on Roosevelt. It is interesting, however.

be refreshed by a walk in the morning air. These and their like were better to him than the artificial luxuries of wealth.

In general, like Emerson, he had an optimistic nature. "I have had a happy life, and there is not much of it I would change if I could live it over again [a remarkable confession]. I think I was born under happy stars, with a keen sense of wonder (which has never left me, and which only becomes jaded a little now and then), and with no exaggerated notion of my own deserts. I have shared the common lot, and have found it good enough for me" ("Leaf and Tendril," p. 241).

He repeats, that if he had his life to live over again, and had his choice, he would choose again this beautiful and picturesque world to live in, engarlanded with seasons, swathed by seas, banded by fruitful continents, and looking out into eternity as it rolls and rolls. (Evidently, this man had a nature as sane and well-balanced as Goethe's.) He finds a slow secular amelioration running through time and change. Providence is a terrific benefactor, and our little pains, nay, death itself, we must accept (he says with Marcus Aurelius) as being good for the universe, and therefore good for us. The ends of the universe are not solely our ends, in our interests alone. If this earth perish, Nature cares little. She has material for plenty more. Death is the method in use to keep the universe young and fresh.

John Burroughs concludes one of his few formal self-analyses by thus summing up the lesson of his

life: "That one may have a happy and not altogether useless life on cheap and easy terms; that the essential things are always near at hand; that one's own door opens upon the wealth of heaven and earth; and that all things are ready to serve and cheer one. Life is a struggle, but not a warfare; it is a day's labor, but labor on God's earth, under the sun and stars with other laborers, where we may think and sing and rejoice as we work."

"Oom John" (as Roosevelt called him) was not a good mixer, not gregarious, clubable; did not smoke or drink or sit up late;—and of what use are you as a mixer, pray, if you can not do these things? He was no politician, was shy, shunned society, but surrendered himself to nature without effort. "Bird and beast take to me and I to them," he said. "I can look in the eye of an ugly dog and win him, but with an ugly man I have less success."

In fact, he does not appeal equally to all classes. His message is mainly to the nature-student and to the lover of poetry. I have many a time been astonished to find intelligent people who had never heard of him, after all the advertising he got from his friends, especially in New York. But his following will steadily increase. His delightful sense of humor, for one thing, will buoy up his books in the stream of time.

We are told that there was some cousin-red between Burroughs and the Irish. He could scarcely have been pure Scot.*

*His mother's name was Kelley. But I believe we are justified

He was essentially a farmer, through thick and thin; a thinking yeoman at base; and at heart a poet. He hitched his wagon to a star, but also hitched his star to a wagon: he was Emersonian plus farmer. A man of deep veracity; a slow, patient plodder in his thought-processes, tempering his steel over and over till he had it to his mind.

Like Thoreau, he had little use for cities, and still less for the fine arts, such as music and painting, of which he knew almost nothing. When he was in Boston with me I could not get him to go even once to the Museum of Fine Arts; but he would slip off with his boy (a true country boy himself) to dime museums and minstrel and prestidigitator shows. He cared nothing for hothouse roses or orchids. Wanted to get quickly into the open air. Detested the old horse-cars for their bad ventilation; hated tobacco; and in general disliked all artificialities, loving only the natural and genuine. When I made him a present of one of two little pigskin purses I had bought in England, he was only content when assured of its genuineness.

I think the need of outdoor life was forced on him, as in the case of my old ornithological friend, Bradford Torrey, by the possession of a bad liver. He

in thinking she was at least in part Scotch-Irish in stock, which means that she had Scotch blood in her veins. The father of Burroughs had red hair and might have been allied with some of the Scotch that were all about his farm region. "Oom John" exhibits in his works so strong, so very remarkable, a leaning to the Scotch (the literature and the people), that his origin is bewrayed. To Scotland he was drawn as the needle to the magnet. He tells us in "My Boyhood" that his mother was Irish on the paternal side, but tells us nothing about her maternal forbears.

finally discovered that all he needed was exercise, fruit juices, and bran, massaging the bowels, eating coarse cereals and vegetables and the like. Having each received from our forbears a damaged fragment of a liver, we were saying one day that we couldn't take milk. "No, you can't drink it," said he, "but you can eat a little of it" (with solid food). During the quarter of a century that I knew him he was always complaining of his head or digestion, or heart-trouble, or malaria, or the grippe. His son says he was very intemperate in his eating during early manhood ("My Boyhood," p. 243). With all his sweetness of nature he had a high flash-point, was easily irritated in small things. On being challenged by me once to say whether his domestic infelicity were not in great part his own fault, he gruffly but honestly blurted out, "I s'pose so."* The doctors said his heart trouble was due simply to indigestion and nervousness. He was a sound sleeper, and even snored, as I know by once sleeping in the same room and bed with him in his own home.

And yet Burroughs was essentially a healthy man, of great elasticity of body, and of bearded and well-grained manhood. Open-air life always cured

*Here is an illuminating passage by the son, Julian, in "My Boyhood": "Mother was economical, thrifty, material, suspicious of people, determined to bring their ship to a snug harbor before old age, and she took the best of care of father and held him steady, and no doubt by her strength of character and firmness gave strength and firmness to his life. Their last years were most happy together and filled with a sympathy and understanding that were beautiful."

She was what I should call a country lady, strong and of distinguished bearing.

him. Once when he had the grippe, three days at his hermitage Slabsides brought him around after other remedies had failed. To borrow a couple of lines from that old bruin, Ellery Channing, of Concord, he was

"The spicy farming sage
Who springs from bed each morning with a cheer."

And in his green and hale old age, looking forward to the infinite, he was still ready to greet the unseen with a cheer, as his optimistic, yet agnostic, books show—unless we except almost his last words, written in the depression of illness in California.

Speaking of his father's personal appearance, his son Julian says: "He had a thin white skin that bled easily at a scratch, fine wavy hair, a fine-grained fluid kind of body like the new growth of ferns or new shoots of willows, medium-sized hands broad and brown, eyes grayish-brown, light, with a hint of green, voice soft, clothes soft and subdued in color" ("My Boyhood," p. 237).

A Southern lady, Laura Sterrette M'Adoo, writes: "I was impressed from the first moment with the native dignity of the man. A tall, strong figure and a fine determined rugged face, young despite the silvered hair and beard, was the surface personality. And as soon as he spoke the subtle elements of character in keeping with these outward traits made themselves felt. There was a serene self-unconsciousness, the most unaffected bearing. If I had been asked for a characterization in

one word, I should unhesitatingly have said—genuineness.”

If I myself were asked to put into one word his soul, I should name the one overmastering yearning of him—ambition, the determination at all hazards to break the bars of circumstance and grasp the skirts of happy chance and do something distinguished. In this devouring ambition, as well as in love of the genuine, of farming, and of swinging an ax, he had points of resemblance to good old Horace Greeley, I should say.

The life of our Naturalist was gentle. He shunned noise and strife by the sure instinct of the poet. It seemed on the whole as if he mellowed to an even more gentle sweetness of disposition and charitableness for all. Tho boyishly pleased with notoriety, his head was never too big for his front door. The secret of his charm was his canny lovable-ness, his gentle honesty quietly housed, not boisterous yet firmly asserted.

In his autobiographical note called “An Egotistical Chapter (Indoor Studies)” he says: “My unliterary environment has doubtless been best suited to me. Probably the little freshness and primal sweetness my books contain is owing to this circumstance . . . I never had any aptitude for scholarly attainments.”

He believed that it was better to hear the lark sing than, while burning the midnight oil of the scholar, to hear the mouse cheep. And yet, in his later life, he issued volume after volume on human

and literary themes; evidently had the scholarly ambition after all. These books are not, perhaps, of the same predestined and spheric perfection as the first six nature volumes, or indeed any of his purely outdoor studies of field and forest. Occasionally, in his polemical writings, a hair hangs by the nib of his pen. He tells us that the reading of good Thomas Wentworth Higginson, as I said, first started him to writing on outdoor themes, gave his pancake a toss in that direction, and that he was also encouraged to write by Walt Whitman, he and Walt being then both in Washington together.

I believe "Oom John" could never be got to say anything bitter against another, whosoever he might be, unless it were enemies of Walt Whitman, or nature-fakirs; and even against these (the foes of what he loved best in the world) he would never in conversation say more than a word or so in quiet reprobation, tho he occasionally wrote scathingly of them. In conversation he neither whitewashed nor blackwashed. Irenic by nature; never a logic chopper or bravo in a quarrel, tho stubborn in standing for what he believed to be the truth. "Soople" in immaterial things, but not so easy-going as to be slack-twisted.

He had the tender Celtic or Scottish heart and fidelity to kith and kin. Every year he made a visit to Walt Whitman in Camden. O'Connor and the rest of us had our temporary personal differences with the Old Gray Poet; but Burroughs, I believe, never did. To the end, Whitman was his revered

master and friend. In writing and speaking of him he drew the straightest of furrows.

I can hardly agree with Henry Ford, that if you had offered "Oom John" a million dollars in one hand and the sight of a new bird in the other, he would have chosen the sight of the new bird. For he had a close grip on the graith and the gear, the Scotch thrift for the wee pickle gowd, looked on the two sides of a penny ere he spent it; was all-acquisitive, and "conveyed" things *more Scotorum* from others' works *ad libitum*, always giving them, of course, the Burroughs earmark. This tendency to take what he could get is well illustrated by an anecdote of his youth at school. He was required to write twelve lines of original composition. He copied something out of a comic almanac. His theft was detected. Again, in desperation, upon his second trial he paid Jay Gould, his classmate, sixty cents for a twelve-line verse, which he handed in as his own. (If it be granted by me that I have only anonymous newspaper authority for this, I will say that, in Burroughs's book, "My Boyhood" (p. 203), his son tells of a precisely identical thing that John did for him [the son] at Harvard).* Yet, as I have said, he was generosity and kindness itself to his

*A friend of mine to whom I had introduced Burroughs spoke of Zola one day in the Boston Athenæum. "Tell me about him," said John, "I know nothing about him." My friend recommended two of Zola's books. He read them in the library and embodied his thoughts on him in a magazine article, in which my friend was amused to see his own ideas reproduced as he had unfolded them to Burroughs. He said he wanted new material; had a larger market for his wares than he could supply.

kith and kin, often lending a hand financially to his four brothers; for example, a thousand dollars to this one, and a hundred dollars a year and forty crates of grapes to another. He loaned Walt Whitman sums up to one hundred dollars. (He told me that Walt always carefully repaid him.)

The hero, says Emerson, is ever in the press of knights and the thick of events. Burroughs was rather the knights' minstrel than the hero; but we love him as men loved their minstrel in the old days.

Being partly of Celtic blood, he had of course some whims and whams and eccentricities. Was very self-centered, as are all men of the perfervid races. As a Whitmanite he disliked very much the atrociously bitter and underhand attacks of Thomas Wentworth Higginson on the Old Gray Poet,—attacks inspired by William Douglas O'Connor's ill-advised flaying of Higginson in his famous Good Gray Poet pamphlet. I remember Burroughs telling us in Belmont with great glee how he once jumped up and successfully hid behind the door in Horace Scudder's drawing-room in Buckingham Street in Cambridge, to avoid meeting Scudder's neighbor, Higginson, altho he said Higginson had always treated him well, personally.

In a little volume of table-talk and nature-lore published in Boston, in 1897 ("In Portia's Gardens"), I gave a brief estimate of Burroughs that pleased him. I said among other things:

"He presents points of sharp contrast with Thoreau. He has abundance of humor; Thoreau,

very little. Thoreau is ever pounding the pulpit, 'hammering in every moral with a pile-driver,' as Frank Colby, the humorist, says. Burroughs in his nature books never preaches, except by indirection—which is the best way after all. He has little of the *saeva indignatio* of the brave Concord thinker; but you feel that in the make-up of this gay angler and forest-roamer, bird-lover and horticulturist there is an ample supply of the moral fiber hidden somewhere out of sight,—shown, for example, in his lifelong apologia for his and our prophet-bard Walt Whitman. His Scotch blood tells. If he wears the thistle in his cap, he carries the rose on his breast. Under his steel-chain hauberk beats the tender heart of a woman. He has the shrewdest horse-sense; and if he falls, alights on his feet. The eye of a hawk and the scent of a greyhound for facts he has. A keen critic if he chose. See how he handles Emerson . . . But the chief service of Burroughs is to cheer. He makes you in love with life; with human life at any rate. A page of the Lambish quintessence of John will take all the kinks out of your head, and send a thrill of good feeling down your spinal ganglia, clear to your toes. His works are sunshine in preserve. He is booked for a long journey down the road of time."

Speaking of my allusions in the foregoing to the Scotch traits observable in John Burroughs, Dr. Clara Barrus, in a pleasant note to me, dated June 3, 1921, says: "I fear you will have to substitute the

shamrock for the thistle in this delightful and discriminating passage. Kelley, his mother's name, is not a Scottish name."

Very true, but it does not disprove the Scottish strain in his blood. As I have hinted in a previous foot-note, his ancestors, may have come over from nearby Ayrshire to Londonderry, or Belfast and environs, and intermarried with some Protestant Irish family. And, *vice versa*, a Scottish friend of mine tells me he knew in Scotland a Scottish family named Murphy! There was much of this passing back and forth over the narrow channel in King James First's time; and this very day (1923) there is a great commotion in Scotland on account of a portentous immigration of masses of Catholic Irish into the central Scottish plain, and the consequent removal to other countries of thousands of the Protestant population. In a letter to me, Mr. Burroughs told me that the characterization of him and his work by me (from which I have just quoted) was the best ever made of him up to that date, and he said nothing against the Scottish part of it. But I base my quartering of his escutcheon, its blazonry, not so much on the enthusiastic love of the Scottish people shown in his books, his long visits in the Carlyle and Burns neighborhoods, his calling on Carlyle and reverent visit to his grave, his expressed preference, in his letters to me, for the Scotch over the English, and even his bringing home with him to America of an Ayrshire servant lass, as well as a blue bonnet which he wore on the

farm at "Riverby,"—not on these things so much as the telling, ingrained Scottish trait of him (so un-Irish), his close-fisted thrift, the stubborn tight-wad obstinacy, when the family would attempt to get money from him, as illustrated by family stories which it would be an impropriety for me to repeat. This trait is the pure Scottish article, and is quite consistent with his generosity to his own brothers. Even the soft feminine nature that he inherited from his mother might have been partly Scotch. In what a remarkable degree ultrasoft-heartedness lies imbedded in the Scottish nature is shown in Barrie's women, as we all know. Mind, I am not denying his having Irish blood in him. Quite likely he did have it. His ensemble certainly suggested in some degree the soft blarney, the gentle and winning melancholy and dreaminess of the Irishman. But that there was a strong strain of Scottish blood in him I think I have given what amounts to absolute proof. I do not see how the facts will fit any other theory.

II
BOYHOOD

II

BOYHOOD

OUTWARD events in Burroughs's life—his birth, April 3, 1837, on the paternal farm at Roxbury, New York; his playing the whackbairn in half a dozen little surrounding towns, after he had assumed the *latus clavus* of manhood; the extremely scant schooling he himself had received; his marriage at twenty-one to Ursula North, the securing by his own efforts, in 1863, of a position in the United States Treasury under Secretary M'Cullough; his work as a bank examiner for a decade, until he got back, in 1873, to the soil of his native State, purchasing land in that year and building a home on the west shore of the Hudson River, near Esopus (later called West Park); his work here, at "Riverby," as a vineyardist; the construction here of his two detached summer studios; and his later drifting back to write in summer at his birthplace, the old farm in Roxbury, presented to him by Henry Ford (afterward bought back by Mr. Ford to form a memorial to Burroughs); and his death on the cars in Ohio in 1921—these things, and his studies of men and nature abroad, are more or less familiar to his readers.

But let us linger a while over Roxbury, the scene of his boyhood days. He loved to dwell on his early life on the old farm. This consisted of 350

acres lying on the slope of "Old Clump," a conical mountain 3,000 feet above sea level. The farm itself is 2,000 feet above the sea. On the upper pastures the snow often lies ten feet deep, and lasts till the middle of May.

About "Old Clump," Burroughs writes with enthusiasm: "There was . . . something so gentle and sweet and primitive about its natural clearings and open glades, about the spring that bubbled up, from under a tilted rock just below the summit; about the grassy terraces, its hidden ledges, its scattered low-branching, moss-covered maples, the cloistered character of its clumps of small beeches, its domestic-looking mountain-ash, its orchard-like wild black cherries, its garden-like plots of huckleberries, raspberries, and strawberries, the patches of fragrant brakes like dense miniature forests through which one wades as through patches of green midsummer snow, its divine strains of the hermit thrush floating out of the wooded depths below you,—all these things drew me as a boy, and still draw me as an old man" ("My Boyhood," p. 118).

This little old gray farmhouse, when he first made it his summer studio, in 1908, Burroughs christened "Woodchuck Lodge," because it was cordoned about with woodchucks and their dens. He wrote in an old hay-barn. He loved the old farm, its wide, open grassy fields, its smooth-backed hills, and long flowing mountain lines. In these pastures had grazed for over a hundred years the

tranquil-eyed cows, cropping the red-blossomed thorn-trees into hour-glass shape, forming a curious feature of the fields. The woodchucks of the locality had to be taken very seriously. They ate Burroughs's fine garden truck remorselessly. So he just had to shoot them. Their name was legion. Shooting forty or fifty a season did not seem to diminish the number next year at all. With the skins he had made coats, floor rugs and a bed coverlet. Woodchuck meat they found very good.

The mountains of the region are smoothed down by erosion into broad hills and trough-like valleys with sweeping gentle lines of Devonian rock, full of caverns and mossy ledges where the phoebe loves to build its nest. The region is also full of picturesque vertical waterfalls and springs. I have never seen a more enchantingly beautiful waterfall than the Caterskill Fall, lying near the Hudson in this region.

To reach Roxbury you take a little branch railroad train at Rondout on the Hudson, a few miles south of Riverby, and ride for about three hours. Roxbury hills are in sight from Riverby. The Burroughs farmhouse, as Clifton Johnson says, is in a wide upland hollow, commanding a fine panoramic view eastward across a low valley. Beyond, you see on the blue horizon great hills which look like vast waves rolling in from a distant ocean.

Here, in this picturesque mountain locality, John Burroughs was born, April 3, 1837, a little before the day the wake-robin (trillium) was due to bloom.

At Woodchuck Lodge is still kept the old applewood cradle in which he was rocked as a baby. He came from a line of farmers who had emigrated from Bridgeport, Connecticut, on Long Island Sound. They were all narrow "hard-shell" Baptists. His father's great uncle, Captain Stephen Burroughs, was a navigator, and a man of some note in his day ("My Boyhood," pp. 96, 97). Burroughs describes his father, Chauncey A. Burroughs (*ibid.*, pp. 102, 110, and elsewhere), as an absolutely commonplace man, an ignorant red-haired freckled Celtic farmer. He knew the three R's, and taught school a little when young, his future wife (John's mother) being one of his pupils. She herself learned to read, John says, but not to write or cipher ("Burroughs Talks"). The father died in 1884 at the age of 81. John was seventh in a family of ten (some accounts say nine). All the children were timid, non-assertive, lacking in will-power, easily cheated; no bullies; obstinate, but not combative ("weak as water," the strong-natured Mrs. Burroughs called his folks). They were all absolutely illiterate, except John. He was different. His brother Hiram was a dreamer, a failure in all he undertook. John "took to larnin" a little, tho he told Clifton Johnson it took him months to learn the alphabet ("Talks," p. 60). He tells how he made cakes of maple-sugar and peddled them about, to get money for his first English grammar and other school-books. He molded the sugar into little white cakes and put them into a basket. No one else made

such white sugar or got it to market so early. "I sold the cakes at two cents apiece," he says, in "Burroughs Talks," "and the money had value that no money has had since. Money that I get now doesn't stick to my fingers as that did. Oh, how I wish I could get some that would give me the same delight! I know I had three dollars in silver quarters one Spring, and I was the envy of every boy in town. I had charm, I had power. I used to carry the sugar money around for a month or so till the novelty wore off before I began to spend it."

There is a great deal of parochial and bucolic descriptive material in "My Boyhood," and in "Talks," about the Roxbury farm life; but it all repays reading. In this back-country place Burroughs, as a boy, lived the primitive life of the farmers of that day,—homespun linen (flaxen and scratchy), cider, "apple sass," tallow candles (with hooks on the candlesticks so as to attach them to chairs), the long-handled frying-pan of the fireplace, the brick oven, the apple-paring bees, and, above all, the country school where Burroughs received all the schooling he ever had (except one year at certain rural academies), and where he had his calf-loves among the girls.

Sundays at the farm were indeed sunny days. The girls went to church; but the boys were allowed to roam about and play. Even fishing was condoned, especially if it resulted in trout for the table.

Farm life then revolved around the cow (and does so still). "Her paths were in the fields and woods,

her sonorous voice was upon the hills, her fragrant breath was upon every breeze." John's father kept about thirty cows, of the Durham breed. His mother in forty years made and packed thousands of 50- and 100-pound tubs and firkins of butter. A churning-machine propelled by a big dog, or by a wether, churned the cream. The butter was all delivered in wagon-loads at Catskill on the Hudson. Burroughs's father, like Carlyle's, was a good mason, to the extent, at least, of building many miles of excellent stone fence on the farm. His fences will probably live as long as his son's books, perhaps longer.

The rough shirts of the men were made at home from the flax; the sheets and bed comforters came from the farm wool, woven by the good mother. "But now," he sighs, "for more than sixty years the music of the spinning-wheel has not been heard in the land." Burroughs's description of a barn-raising tallies one I have in manuscript, by my father, tho Burroughs's account is briefer and far inferior in dramatic and vivacious phrasing to that of my father's narrative. Burroughs's descriptions of maple-sugar making I can testify to as true to the life in the minutest detail, as I used to help make it in Ohio as a boy.

In his talk about haymaking ("My Boyhood," p. 55), you find this appetizing paragraph: "Those mid-forenoon lunches of mother's,—good rye bread and butter, with crullers and gingerbread, and in August, a fresh green cucumber, and a sweating

jug of water fresh from the spring,—sweating, not as we did, because it was hot, but because it was cold, partaken under an ash or a maple tree—how sweet the memory of it all is to me!”

As a youngster, before he reached the age of puberty, Johnny had been made very timid about spooks by the numerous ghost stories told by his maternal grandfather Kelley, who believed devoutly what he narrated. John had a mortal terror of certain holes under the barn, of the rural graveyard, and the like.

Farm life as he knew it no longer exists among his native hills. The human stock he thought depleted. The old social husking-bee feeling is gone; town life has absorbed the country. Whereat John groaned; and well he might.

The academies Burroughs attended were a literary institute at Ashland, not far from Roxbury, and a seminary at Cooperstown. In these schools he took high-school studies, falling in love with the girls, spouting as an orator, etc.

For several years he taught various schools, once going as far afield as Freeport, Illinois, where he taught six months at forty dollars a month, and then came home, because of “the girl he left behind him.” On the trip to Illinois he rode for the first time on the railroad. He imagined the train would start with a terrific jerk, and so held his hat on tight to prevent its falling off! This was in 1856, when he was nineteen.

“It was pretty hard,” he says, “to stay as long as

I did," so far away from her. He married at the age of twenty, on a capital of fifty dollars. During the first year of married life, Ursula continued to live with her family, the Norths, sixteen miles away from the place where her husband was teaching school. Every Friday he closed school early and walked that distance to stay over Saturday and Sunday with her. In 1862 he taught near West Point, where he met Emerson for the first time. And there, too, he read one of Audubon's books, which was a landmark in his life and first interested him in the study of birds.

He studied medicine for a while with a certain Dr. Hull near Ashokan, and there in the doctor's office he wrote his poem, "Waiting."

An episode of these days was the patent-buckle enterprise. He borrowed money to go into the thing. On non-payment of the note he was arrested and brought up the river on a night boat. On reaching Newburg, the guard being asleep, he got up, dressed, and went ashore, and stayed ashore. The arrest was not legal anyway, and the matter was soon settled with the creditor.

III

IN WASHINGTON AND AT RIVERBY

III

IN WASHINGTON AND AT RIVERBY

WE MAY now shift the slides to show the young married man as a resident of Washington, D. C., where he obtained a situation as government clerk, where he made the acquaintance of Walt Whitman and William Douglas O'Connor, and where he wrote his first book, "Wake Robin,"* and his early sketch of Whitman. Indeed, he went to Washington for two reasons—to see Walt and to enlist in the army.

The Hon. Hugh M'Cullough, ex-Secretary of the Treasury, in his "Men and Measures of Half a Century" (p. 166), speaking of the National Currency Bureau as it was in 1863, says: "One day a young man called at my office and said to me that he understood that the force of the bureau was to be increased, and that he would be glad to be employed. I asked him if he had any recommendations. 'I have not,' he said, 'I must be my own.' I looked at his sturdy form and intelligent face, which impressed me so favorably that I sent his name to the Secretary, and the next day he was at work as

*Mr. Clyde Fisher says that Burroughs told him that "Wake Robin" was named from the large-flowered white trillium, and not from the red flower. He said that Walt Whitman chose the title out of a list that Burroughs submitted to him. Emerson, it seems, praised it as a capital title.

a twelve-hundred-dollar clerk. [This salary was afterward raised to \$2,100, when he became Chief of Organization Division of National Banks.] I was not mistaken: he became an excellent clerk, competent and faithful and willing. Since that, he has been a worker in a different field and become a most captivating and instructive writer. I never see an article from the pen of John Burroughs which I do not read with pleasure and without calling to mind his appearance when he said to me, 'I must be my own recommendation.' "

Julian Burroughs writes that his father said there were inaccuracies in this narrative by M'Cullough, but we are not told what they are. The job in the Treasury consisted of sitting in front of an iron vault for seven hours a day and keeping track of the new unsigned bills that were put in and taken out. John himself says, with his usual sincerity, that he was never a very good clerk. He would get to thinking of other things and make mistakes.

The question now was how and where to be housed. He wanted considerable land for a garden. His farming instincts came to the front. He wanted to combine farming and government work, and raise truck to sell. He thought the cultivation of a farm would be "a good antidote to the Treasury work." But Washington itself was rural then, as is well known. So he eventually rented a house and an acre of land.

The house was "a quaint brick structure" two stories high, on Capitol Hill itself, where the marble

Senate Office-building now is. There was in the rear a little house where a darky lived. There was also a barn; so he proceeded to keep a cow and chickens and raise "garden sass" to sell. They sold milk and eggs and green stuff, sublet rooms, and saved about half of the master's salary. The Treasury was about a mile distant.

He got cured of raising fowls by having them all (about a dozen) stolen one night by the darkies. I can sympathize; for, about the same year, I myself, out in Ohio, had, as a boy, an even dozen young silver pheasants stolen, silently bagged all in one night by our negro neighbors. But John fared better than I did; he recovered all of his hens in the "nigger" quarter. They were already dead; but, the heads being still on, he was able easily to identify them. He and his wife lived on chicken for a spell, and gave away what they could not eat.

During the war, as always, Burroughs was one of Lincoln's supporters. It required courage then in some quarters to be a Lincoln man. He says he stood alone at home in a family of Copperheads. He used to see Lincoln "and once shook hands with him. He was no such grotesque country clodhopper as Barnard represents him. The statue is a caricature."*

*So also it seems to me, who saw Lincoln in Cincinnati when I was a small boy. And so it must seem to my friend, Douglas Volk, the painter of King Albert and of Lloyd George, who as a little boy sat on Lincoln's knee, and who has painted what is admitted to be the most ideally perfect portrait of him ever made,—quite different from the Barnard conception, tho Volk speaks highly of Barnard's genius.

Burroughs's introduction to the bird life of our Eastern States could not have taken place in a more favorable locality than Washington. I passed my boyhood in that latitude in southern Ohio, and recognize in his descriptions all the poetic features of life south of the thirty-ninth parallel. The summers are indeed a purgatory of heat and dust, dried-up grass, stifling air, etc. As in Rome, Italy, in midsummer, the only way life can become endurable is to stay indoors with fans and ices, if you can, and lightly clad, until the cool of the evening. But with the arrival of the strong electric days of autumn (October and November) all this is changed. The rains have come, the air has a tingling crispness and stimulus. The trees are masses of gold and crimson and maroon. Sunsets and sunrises are inconceivably gorgeous, the skies high, and "all the air a quiet stillness holds."

There are no deep snows in winter, nor are any long lasting; the heavens are warm and blue. It is an ideal place to study birds, which abound in sheltered places even in winter. In February, Burroughs found there in Washington the purple finch, the Carolina wren, vesper-sparrow—indeed, all the sparrows,—the kinglet, the shore-lark, the chewink, etc. Among noteworthy bird residents are the cardinal, the waggish chat, and the Louisiana water-thrush. As for wild flowers, he picked them every month in the year.

Burroughs says of his bird studies in general, that he did not study the birds so much as love

them. "Study them? No, I have played with them, camped with them, gone berrying with them." Knowledge of them filtered into his mind unconsciously. "The live bird," he says, "is a fellow-passenger. We are making the voyage together, and there is a sympathy between us that quickly leads to knowledge."

As I said, Burroughs had come to Washington with the idea of becoming a soldier, the Civil War then (1863) being in full swing. I have elsewhere told from his own account how this ambition came to naught.

For nine years he sat at his high desk in front of the Treasury vaults, and during this time, under the encouragement of Walt Whitman, wrote his first nature book, "Wake Robin," a volume not of course equal to his later works, but very charming. It is on the birds of his old home in the Catskills and of his Washington environment. For the purpose of sure identification he at this time in his life felt it was necessary to shoot the birds occasionally, deceiving the park guards as best he could in the matter, when the shot was heard. He carried a cane gun.

In 1873 he became bank examiner in his native State, at Middletown and elsewhere. This bank work lasted over ten years. The son, Julian, says he lost the work, finally, owing to his radical and independent stand in politics as a Mugwump ("My Boyhood," p. 144). The Middletown job lasted for

five years. John Burroughs says he was pretty good at figures.

In the meantime he had bought a little nine-acre farm in the town of Esopus, a part of which town afterward received the name of West Park and became his own post-office. In 1873 he built a rather pretentious stone residence at West Park, about the time he was writing "Winter Sunshine." John built a little of the chimney himself, and built all of the one at "Slabsides." He paid what he admits was an extravagant price for the place, \$7,000.

The stone for the house came, free, from a quarry not far distant. And yet the house cost him \$6,000, an extravagant price. For \$1,500 or \$2,000 he could have built a fine roomy, plastered bungalow, as I know by experience. Thoreau says that in 1847 an average house cost about \$800. He paid four dollars and a quarter for his (!)—second-hand, bought of an Irish laborer. When he had plastered and reconstructed it to suit him he found the cost to amount to \$28.12½ cents.

For the interior finish of his house Burroughs used oiled native woods. There was on the place a shabby old barn, and an old farmhouse, which served afterward many useful temporary purposes. He said that he would not again have built so pretentious a house, but rather a low bungalow, letting necessity guide him in the construction.

He did not feel it safe to give up his bank work till 1886. In his letters to me he used to complain of his head-breaking work as bank examiner. But

his change of residence benefited his health. The malaria was not so bad at Riverby, and work in the open did him good.

As a horticulturist he was a success, altho he did not (no one could under the circumstances) make a success of small fruits and celery and peaches, as he did in a marked degree with grapes. He had the usual tribulations of small fruit-growers; but they made a good deal of money, first and last, he and Julian, with the grapes, which is more than most of his neighbors did. There is a good deal in the autobiographical notes on the grape-culture, its triumphs and woes.

At first, the only railroad was on the East shore. To take a train you had to cross the river either by boat or on the ice; the latter was sometimes dangerous. There was a great inducement to the purchase of the place; namely, a wild tract, miles in extent, to the west, studded and laced with secluded ponds and streams.

Walt Whitman in "Specimen Days," describes in graphic phrase, the daily and nightly sights that the Burroughs family saw from their outlook on the hillside Hudson shore:

"I see, hear, the locomotives and cars, rumbling, roaring, flaming, smoking, constantly, away off there, night and day—less than a mile distant, and in full view by day. I like both sight and sound. Express trains thunder and lighten along; of freight trains, most of them very long, there can not be less than a hundred a day. At night far down you

see the headlight approaching, coming steadily on like a meteor. The river at night has its special character-beauties. The shad fishermen go forth in their boats and pay out their net—one sitting forward, rowing, and one standing up aft dropping it properly—marking the line with little floats bearing candles, conveying, as they glide over the water, an indescribable sentiment and doubled brightness. I like to watch the tows at night, too, with their twinkling lamps, and hear the husky panting of the steamers; or catch the sloops' and schooners' shadowy forms, like phantoms, white, silent, indefinite, out there. Then the Hudson of a clear moonlight night. . . . Sometimes (as at present writing), middle of sunny afternoon, the old 'Vanderbilt' steamer stalking ahead—I plainly hear her rhythmic, slushing paddles—drawing by long hawsers an immense and varied following string (an old sow and pigs, the river folks call it). First comes a big barge, with a house on it, and spars towering over the roof; then canal boats, a lengthen'd, clustering train, fasten'd and link'd together—the one in the middle with high staff, flaunting a broad and gaudy flag—others with the almost invariable lines of new-wash'd clothes, drying; two sloops and a schooner aside the tow—little wind, and that adverse—with three long, dark, empty barges bringing up the rear. People are on the boats: men lounging, women in sunbonnets, children, stove-pipes with streaming smoke."

There you have it—a few impressionist strokes

and the thing is done once for all in a Flemish masterpiece. Walt's Netherlandic ancestry tells. Burroughs, in twenty volumes, never once gave the living artist-touch and drew a living picture of what was before his door in the way the great master, with his Sargentesque style, hit it off in a few minutes so that one never forgets it.

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IV
REMINISCENCES

IV

REMINISCENCES

MY FIRST acquaintance with Burroughs grew out of our common admiration of Walt Whitman, about whom we each published much. To save fatigue, Walt wrote many letters jointly, to Burroughs, to Dr. R. M. Bucke, and to myself, labeling, "K., please forward to Burroughs, and Burroughs to Dr. Bucke."

The numerous visits from John Burroughs that we enjoyed at our eyrie in Belmont, overlooking Boston, began, I believe, in 1896, he being then on a lecturing tour. He told how Walt Whitman, while in a horse-car in Washington, had had his pocket picked of \$400 of Peter Doyle's money, and how Walt had paid it all back, dollar by dollar. Dr. Bucke told me that Walt borrowed of him also, but always paid it back. (Evidently, this borrowing was a fixed bad habit of Walt's).

In 1898 Mr. and Mrs. Burroughs passed a part of the winter in Cambridge to be near Julian (son of one of John Burroughs's brothers, probably Curtis), adopted in infancy, as Walt Whitman, as well as Burroughs himself, told me. Julian was then in Harvard. All three were with us on Thanksgiving Day of the year just mentioned. Mrs. Burroughs was clearly a person of native refinement and vigor, handsome and strong-willed. John discovered that

the clam-juice we had for him at dinner was new to him and the best thing he had ever tried for sleeplessness and to stop palpitation of the heart. He told William James of it and James said he was going off hot-foot to get some.

Burroughs found that writing among the crowd of students in their huge reading-room at Harvard was a stimulus to his thought. The two Burroughses had rooms and board in Felton Hall for a month, and he later alone at 24 Irving Street, where he amused himself by writing verses (on the Arbutus, the Hepatica, the Hermit-thrush, the Phœbe, etc.). He read these to me for suggestions, frankly admitting that he was modeling them, as to form and meter, on poems already famous. These little poems seem to me to have considerable charm. John o'Birds never claimed to be anything but a minor and occasional verse writer, nor did he find poetry a catching and incurable disease; but his booklet of poems makes pleasant reading for half an hour. It is his only Pegasus-flight. The blue-bird owes him a warble for this genre bit, painted with heart's blood:

A wistful note from out the sky,
 "Pure, pure, pure," in plaintive tone,
 As if the wand'rer were alone,
 And hardly knew to sing or cry.

But now a flash of eager wing,
 Flitting, twinkling by the wall,
 And pleadings sweet and am'rous call,—
 Ah, now I know his heart doth sing!

Perhaps the prettiest flower poem is this:

TRAILING ARBUTUS *

Sequestered flower of April days,
Thy covert bloom in forest ways
 A spell about me weaves ;
Thy frosted petals' faint pink glow,
Crystal pure like urns of snow
That all with incense overflow,
 Half hid beneath the leaves.

Thy ear lies close upon the ground,
Far off it hears the thrilling sound
 Of Spring's oncoming feet ;
Nor lingering snow, nor chilling day,
Can long the genial hours delay
 That fill thy chalice sweet.

Thy brittle leaves so harsh and hard,
So torn by winds, by winter marred,
 Enhance thy tender face ;
And he whose days are evergreen,
Tho storms may come and frosts be keen
 Is sharer in thy grace.

I note that the central idea, as well as some of the phrasing, of Burroughs's one famous poem "Waiting" (written in 1862, in the back room of Dr. Hull's office near Ashokan, where he was studying medicine, when he was in his nadir and was poor, and gloomy as to his future; when he was not enjoying by any means a spanking revenue; in fact,

*Quoted entire here by permission of Houghton Mifflin Co.

was pulling the devil by the tail, as they say)* are an unconscious reminiscence of certain passages in Emerson's prose and poetry, in both of which the mind of him was steeped. In his Oversoul essay, Emerson says: "The things that are really for thee gravitate to thee. Oh, believe, as thou livest, that every sound that is spoken over the round world, which thou oughtest to hear, will vibrate to thine ear! Every proverb, every book, every by-word, that belongs to thee for aid or comfort, shall surely come home through open or winding passages."

And in the lines prefixed to "Compensation" Emerson sings:

"And all that Nature made thine own,
Floating in air or pent in stone,
Will rive the hills and swim the sea,
And like thy shadow, follow thee."

So Burroughs, in unconscious imitation, sings, in the very same meter:

"Serene I fold my hands and wait,
Nor care for wind or tide or sea;
I rave no more 'gainst time or Fate,
For lo! mine own shall come to me."

*Down in Kentucky (or was it in North Carolina?), when I was a boy, the people of the Knobs reckoned distances by "sights" and "go-by's." Such and such a place was, *e.g.*, distant "two sights and a go-by." When he wrote "Waiting," Burroughs had passed over one long sight, that of his youth, and was in the go-by, the node or doldrums, between that and another sight. So was young Emerson when he wrote "Good-by Proud World," and so was Carlyle, in his memorable mental struggle over entering the "meenistry."

Evidently, at this period (1862), when he had just seen Emerson for the first time at West Point, Burroughs was not yet free from the grip of Emerson on his mind and on his style. Show me the prominent writer in America who was not swept from his feet by the flood of the great mystic's verse and prose on first acquaintance with them.

A young lady friend of mine, a sister of Burroughs's son's wife (I mean Miss Laura Mackay), asked John Burroughs, when he was between seventy and eighty years old, if he still believed in the sentiment expressed in this youthful poem of his. "Yes, if you hustle," he replied. That adds just the right tartness to the original idea, which is too Oriental for the Occidental character. Commenting himself on the poem in one of his later books, Burroughs says, "You must sow the seed before you sit down to wait for the harvest."

In his "Talks" with Clifton Johnson, he is recorded as saying that his folks were hard-shell Baptists, who believed in predestination, and that his "Waiting" was "predestination watered down or watered up." Whittier, it seems, included it in his anthology, "Songs of Three Centuries," and that gave it vogue. A Rhode Island manufacturer, too, printed it in leaflet form as a "sug' red sonnet," for distribution among his friends.

But this is a digression. I was speaking of his life in Cambridge. John was not much of a city chap. He complained of the microbes and the dust; said he could get along with country germs; but the

sophisticated citified germs, as he called them, he could not stand.

"There!" he cried, sneezing, "I suppose that's another d——d microbe got into my nose [it was winter]. I can only get along in the country."

On December 23d he appeared with the empty demijohn which we had filled with water from our hill spring, or well. He wanted some more; said it tasted just like his at home; no other would do.

At this time he was much fêted and dined, or, rather, luncheoned; for he refused, finally, to go out except occasionally to luncheon. His health, like Whittier's, did not permit late hours and excitement. Among those who entertained him in or about Boston were Prof. William James, Professor Child of Harvard, Mrs. James T. Fields, Frederick W. Peabody, Bradford Torrey, and, in Arlington and Belmont, J. T. Trowbridge, William Lyman Underwood, Col. Alfred Norton, Nixon Waterman, and William Prescott Foster.

We had, he and I, many delightful walks and excursions together; looked over his great bound portfolio of views of the Harriman Alaska trip (of which more later); dropped in on his old friend of Washington days, James T. Trowbridge, just mentioned; dined at Allen Chamberlain's at his home on the edge of the Middlesex Fells in Winchester, and took a walk with Allen on Blue Hill. John told a story of a girl charming a copperhead snake they had in a barrel at Slabsides. When we were walk-

ing down through the snow in the Fells, Burroughs remarked that he always tried to walk from three to seven miles daily. (None of his Boswells have made any note of such a custom as this.) Perhaps he knew the fact that one walks about five miles a day while merely doing daily work about a place or in a house. I may have told him during his visit of a lady of my acquaintance who supposed herself to be an invalid; and, to her astonishment, when they attached a pedometer to her person it was found that she was walking five miles a day about the house. I often tell this incident.

In Boston, during the winter in which I am chronicling his doings and conversation, he liked to ride back and forth on the East Boston and the Chelsea ferries. He and I visited a Sportsmen's Show in the city, walking in the three miles from Cambridge. I remember how he pitied the poor little trained dogs (he had a lively affection for dogs, always); said it was pathetic; it was "so hard for them to do what humans do." We went down to the North End, to a city engine-house, and the firemen, apparently impressed by him, went through the form of bringing out the horses at the clang of the bell as if for a real fire,—or, rather, the horses ran forward of their own motion and took their places under the suspended harness and hames.

"It's a poem!" cried Burroughs, as we stepped hastily back to avoid being run down.

In general he complained much of the fatigue he felt in city sight-seeing; he was not used to it. One

day, when we had got clear of the clang of the street-cars, and up into the silence of the evergreens, I saw him lie down and roll over on the pine needles in sheer animal delight and love of the earth contact.

In the summer of 1892 he went to Maine and showed the birds to "Mr. Dickson," who had a cottage there. On his return he came into the *Transcript* office and told me of a deer he had seen in the Rangely Lake region, and how it had seemed to fade away into the forest like a departing dream. That just describes it. He was so enthusiastic about it that I got the impression it was the first time he had ever seen a deer in the open. If so, it throws light on the battle of the naturalists described by me later in this volume.

It must have been in the year 1900 that Burroughs was showing me the big Harriman expedition books, the Report. For it was in 1899 that the expedition took place. Forty persons were invited by the railroad financier, E. H. Harriman, to be his guests on a trip to Alaska, the object being to combine pleasure with scientific research. The party was composed of a number of college professors, some specialists from the Biological and Geological surveys of the Government, two or three well-known artists, as many literary men, a mining expert, and several relatives and friends of Mr. Harriman.

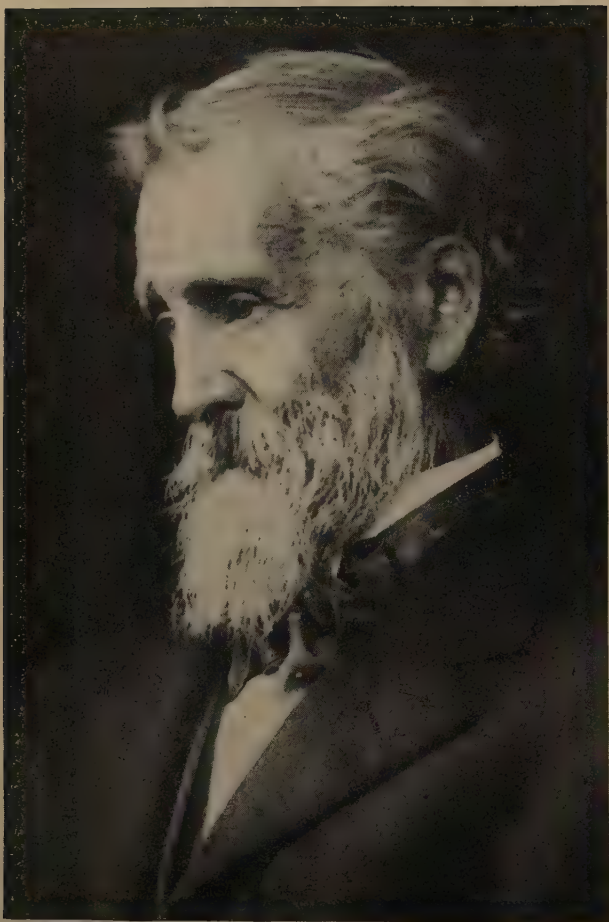
The party went to Seattle by a special train of palace cars and took ship the last day of May. At



EDWARD CARPENTER
British Author



DR. R. M. BUCKE
Taken by his son, Dr. E. Pardee Bucke, at Muskoka



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JOHN MUIR

Seattle appeared John Muir and others of the California group. Altogether there were forty persons in the party, besides the crew and the officers—126 in all. Among the guests were a physician, a trained nurse, and a photographer. Dr. Dall was the specialist on Alaska, and John Muir on glaciers. There was Fernow for forestry; Emerson and Gilbert for geology; Gannett for physical geography; Colville, Brewer and Trelease for plants; Ritter and Saunders for sea life; Merriam for mammals; Ridgway and Fisher and Elliott for birds; Devereux and Palache for mines; Grinnell and Dellenbaugh for the Indians.

For a thousand miles the cruise carried the ship past a magnificent mountain coast of glaciers, fiords, and bays—a panorama, one would judge, like that of Norway on the west coast.

Of course, I can not be expected or permitted to give details of the long Burroughs log-book of this voyage, which lasted for just two months. Among the new birds seen by our friend was the slate-colored Oregon robin, a bird shy and of weird song. The song is described as a long tapering note or whistle, at times with a peculiar tolling effect. The first stanza of John's poem to the bird is as follows:

“O Varied Thrush! O Robin strange!

Behold my mute surprise.

Thy form and flight I long have known,

But not this new disguise.”

John Burroughs's enthusiasm over the photo-

graphs, as we looked over them there in Irving Street, was great,—the bears, the glaciers, the flowery tundras. He thought he should make another trip to Kadiack Island, which the warm Japan current makes so deliciously green and flowery. He admitted that he and John Muir squabbled a good deal during this trip. He found Muir “very opinionative, impatient of contradiction”; and undoubtedly he was so, like Carlyle and Gladstone, and many another. An amusing cut in the Harriman book shows the two Johns, like Achilles and the son of Atreus, standing apart, having quarreled, and looking both very obstinate. On the ship the party practised putting on life-preservers. “Professor E.” he described as a little man with a stentorian voice (Burroughs had very sensitive ears). When he was ill on board he felt like killing “E,” his voice was so irritating. He wished, I guess, with Landor, that the salt-sea shark had his ravin of him. One day they saw sea-lions a few rods off; but, like Christian and his company, in “The Pilgrim’s Progress,” they went softly by them.

On the occasion of my first visit to Burroughs, in 1888, at his place on the Hudson (Riverby), I found him hoeing, and pulling weeds among his grapes, objurgating the weeds lustily, with an occasional good honest “damn.” I stayed all night, taking a peep as I retired, at the sleeping youngster, Julian.

John was always ready to whirl in and have some fun, if it was any kind of a flying-fish day. So, to celebrate my second visit, a year or two later, the

good man hitched up the bay horse, "Major," and drove with Julian and myself (an all-day drive there and back) to Lake Mohonk, where there was a conference going on. We did not patronize the conference, however, J. B. evidently having no other object but to give himself and the boy and myself a good time. John was in a merry mood, and on the road sang his old favorite, "There were three jolly Welshmen," etc. He spent fully a half-hour, I should think, that day, in soothing talk to a doggie that had somehow got down into a deep fissure between two rocks, and could not get out. The idea was to get the confidence of the poor critter, so that it would be safe to grasp him by the scruff of the neck and pull him out. Well, there that man lay, prone on the rock, and talked and talked his coaxing dog-talk, oblivious of us and of time, until finally the animal seemed to be convinced of his friendly intentions and allowed him to get hold of him. You never saw a happier cur than he when he was really freed. The whole thing was a fine lesson in patience and in the tact required in handling animals, as well as a proof of the genuine kind-heartedness of the man. Clifton Johnson says he never passed a dog without a kind word to it. One might almost say that with him dog was god spelled backward. Some time after our drive he gave up his horse. He didn't like being the slave of the critter, and smelling so horsey after currying him.

A valued lady friend of mine, an eminent bird

authority, apparently in some way has an entirely false idea of a little incident narrated in Mr. Burroughs's "Far and Near" (pp. 219-222). It concerns the woes of three little rabbits. Young rabbits are about as cute things as wild life can show, and appeal especially to the heart of this woman naturalist, who has tenderly handled many nests of them in the fields, always returning the little darlings to their warm home, lined with fur from the mother rabbit's breast. Either by hearsay, or through imperfect recollection, she got the story to the effect that Burroughs brutally kicked open a rabbit's nest, and then went off, only to find on his return next day that the young were frozen to death. Nothing of the kind whatever. The facts as narrated by him are that by accident the hired man disturbed the underground nest with his hoe, but at once put the young back under cover, as any half-decent person would have done. Burroughs, on being told of the matter, went next day with a naturalist friend, and, when the long-eared rabbitlings sprang forth in alarm, put them back, petting and quieting them, until he and his friend could tip-toe away. The weather was very warm. But a night or two after there came a heavy freeze, and two of the young were found sitting dead in the remains of the nest, the third having disappeared. The persons concerned in the matter had been as tender-hearted as they knew how to be, being mere men and probably a little bungling. So the charge of cruelty falls to the ground discredited. I know of nothing in Bur-

roughs's life that indicates anything but kind treatment of animals (except when he was the usual specimen of the small boy savage), altho as a man, he undoubtedly regarded them somewhat more as literary material, or as any average farmer might, than with a feeling of sentimental sympathy, such as that of the lady above mentioned. Personally, however, I can't indorse the shooting of birds to identify them, which he "reluctantly" did in the beginning of his bird studies. Like Thoreau, I "named all the birds without a gun," and think he might have done so.

In his "Talks" with Clifton Johnson, Burroughs tells of shooting his first partridge: "I felt no pity for the bird. I was glad to see it flutter there in its death agony. Oh, boys are savages. They don't dread to shed blood. They delight in it." Not all boys do, John. I was partly a country boy, but I cried over my first robin-thrush, and never killed another. At eleven years of age I could "run" my grandfather's sixty-acre farm, and later build with my own hands my two or three lakeside houses; but I did not enjoy killing a wild bird, tho I confess to the chopping off of the heads of certain domestic fowls for food, when a boy. Burroughs tells the truth when, in his talks with a friend, he says he grew more tender-hearted as he grew older. I confess that if the story of the young rabbits had been told of him as a boy I should have believed it. He told a friend (with strong reprobation, to be sure) how, when a small boy, he used to join his boy

friends in stoning young birds they had hung up by the legs! Little wretches! Sioux Indians "have nothing on" boys.

Yet in charity it should be remembered that almost all our brother animals, including very many birds, are the deadly enemies of the farmer and his boys, because sneak-thieves of his hard won products. So farmers get into the habit of killing things.

To return to life at Riverby. When, in the winter, Julian used to go duck shooting on the Hudson, at the foot of the vineyard and farther, the anxious father would follow him along shore, if the ice were bad, shouting, "Come in! Ice all closed up below you!" while the ice kept forming thicker and thicker on the bottom of the boat.

They sometimes had in the autumn ugly adventures with grape-stealing roughs, not to speak of battles with orioles and other birds that threatened to take or spoil all the grapes. Some men once sued Burroughs and his neighbor for pointing a gun at them, and for false charges against them, as they claimed, in the matter of grape-stealing.

Once, in order to apprehend some of these thieves, Burroughs donned a long black coat, at night, and when the thieving boys appeared he suddenly rushed upon them, and succeeded in grabbing one of them by the leg just as he was climbing the fence. The boy "let off a great yell," but was captured. Yet the merciful man let him off. He left his bicycle behind him, he was so scared. But the next morning, appearing to get his "bike," on promising not

to do so again, he was let go and given a hatful of grapes besides!

The call of the wild in Burroughs's blood, tho not very strong, yet was there, latent, and one might say he never was more than two-thirds domesticated. No one not enamored somewhat at least of the wild would get up in the middle of the night to go to the window to listen to a fox barking on the mountain, as he says he often did. Not only did he build him a bark-covered study at two or three hundred yards' distance from the house at Riverby, but went and built later, between one and two miles distant, and up on a wild craggy height, reached by a road through a hemlock wood, his well-known rustic cottage Slabsides, covered with bark slabs, or "sidings," from the mill. He says he was attracted to the spot by its "seclusion, savageness, and elemental grandeur"—as was, apparently, the bald-headed eagle that had its eyrie there. In building Slabsides he was following out Carlyle's suggestion of having two houses between which one might alternate, "change sides, like a fish getting fried." As the woodchuck always has several mansions, or retreating holes, so Burroughs tried to get still another retreat for a last stand against the enemy, and another anchor to windward, in the shape of a (to him) very delightful bit of boscaresque land up somewhere on the side of one of the Catskill mountains. But the deal never went through. The owner could give him no clear title. He said in conversation with a friend: "I was at-

tracted by the purity of the elements there. They were purer than in any other valley in the world. It was a spot untouched by man—water perfect, air perfect, seclusion perfect—couldn't be beat anywhere. The brook that flowed through the woods over the washed stones was absolutely clean; and there were mountains on all sides, a great brotherhood of them joining hands and circling about you" ("Talks," p. 199).

Evidently, this minstrel of the natural year believed with Emerson that,

"Who leaves the pine-tree, leaves his friend,
Unnerves his strength, invites his end.

Whoso walks in solitude,
And inhabiteth the wood,
Chosing light, wave, rock, and bird,
Before the money-loving herd,
Into that forester shall pass
From these companions, power and grace;
Clean shall he be, without, within,

And of all other men desired."

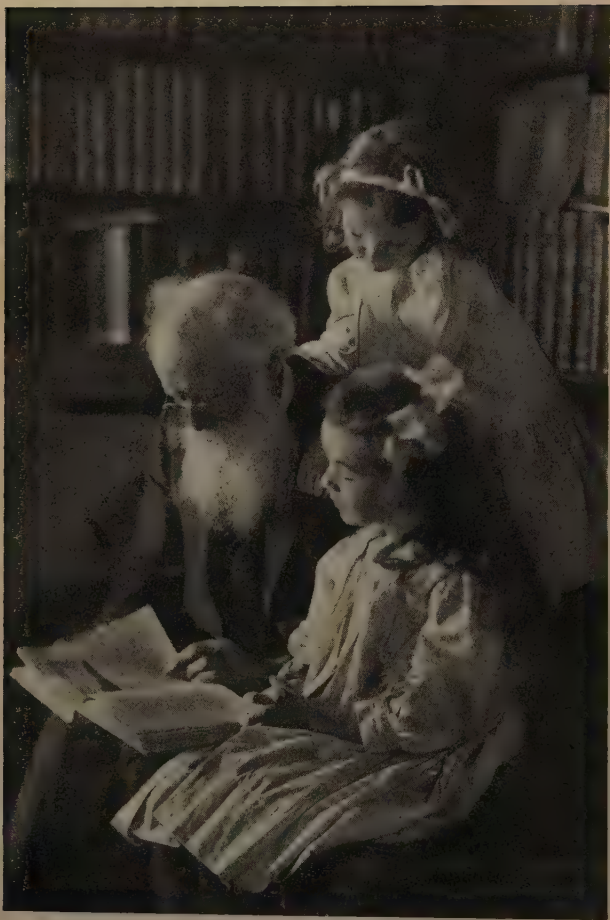
I had a notion at one time, in order to get closer to the marrow of life, to buy a ten-acre tract adjoining Burroughs's Slabsides, as others have done. Writing to me of this in October, 1895, he adds this:

"Last spring I bought 100 acres of wild land near me, covered with woods. I can sell you some of this, commanding a fine view up and down the



JOHN BURROUGHS

From a cabinet photograph taken in 1881. Presented by
Mr. Burroughs to the author



JOHN BURROUGHS AND HIS GRANDCHILDREN
Taken by Laura Mackay in Mr. Burroughs's Study
at "Riverby"

river, for ten dollars an acre. A muck swamp in it of three acres we have cleared off and drained, and I am going into the celery business. It is a gem of a spot, and I have had great comfort in it. I am going to build me a log house on it [different material selected later], and retreat there when I want to sulk, which is pretty often these days, owing to the domestic furies. I have sold a lot of five acres to Ernest Ingersoll, and he will also build a hut on the rocks. I might sell you some muck swamp, so that you could go into the celery business also. Grapes have been very low. Then a hailstorm in July knocked mine all to flitters—destroyed nearly half my crop out and out. Come and buy some land, and begin again at the stump. My paradise is one mile from home.” [Accounts of this distance all differ.]

The celery venture proved to be a success, for quite a time at least. I remember I hunted up information for him among the celery growers of my home town, Belmont, Massachusetts, which is famous for its celery.

Many have told of the great fun they had at Slab-sides with the gay-hearted owner. The enormous number of guests he entertained there proves that he was not the churlish genius who, as Thoreau remarks, wants to be alone, like a dog with a bone, or a patient with the gravel. Thoreau's fellow townsmen used to tell me satirically of the nice things (“minched” pies and diet loaves) he got from home to supplement his hermit fare of potatoes and corn

bread,* and I was told by Julian Burroughs that his father would ask at the house, "What are you folks baking down here? If you have any pies or things I can take some of them to Slabsides." Julian told us how his father would roast a shad in the hot ashes and coals of the fireplace, wrapping it first in a cloth, so the skin would come off with the cloth. He and his many Slabsidian guests also used to roast potatoes and other things in the hot ashes and then draw up to the table and stretch forth their hands upon the good cheer set before them. There is much small talk about Slabsides that is interesting in "Burroughs Talks," and in Clyde Fisher's "Reminiscences."

Immediately back of the hermit retreat up there is a natural cavern, such as I used to see in Kentucky, which forms a capital cool cellar, or ice chest. The descent to it was by way of a rude ladder. Near the cabin an ice-cold spring gushes up. Burroughs often stayed at this study in the wilds for weeks or months at a time, tho, like Thoreau making daily trips down home to the post-office at the railway station. Walt Whitman wrote in "Specimen Days" an inimitable description† of the waterfall at Black Pond not far from Slabsides:

*But I think we may well doubt this Concord gossip; for Thoreau in "Walden," in giving an exact statement in figures of the cost and variety of his food, says: "Nothing was given me of which I have not rendered some account." ("Walden," chap. i.) And if ever a man in this world told the exact truth, Thoreau is that man.

†Quoted by Miss Barrus in her brochure, "The Retreat of a Poet Naturalist" (Boston, Poet Lore Pub. Co., 1905); but she will not mind my printing it also, the diction is so fine.

"I never saw finer or more copious hemlocks, many of them large, some old and hoary. Such a sentiment to them, secretive, shaggy, what I call weatherbeaten and let-alone—a rich underlay of ferns, yew sprouts, and mosses, beginning to be spotted with the early summer wild flowers. Enveloping all, the monotone and liquid gurgle from the hoarse, impetuous, copious fall—the greenish-tawny, darkly transparent waters plunging with velocity down the rocks, with patches of milk-white foam—a stream of hurrying amber, thirty feet wide, risen far back in the hills and woods, now rushing with volume—every hundred rods a fall, and sometimes three or four in that distance. A primitive forest, druidical, solitary, and savage—not ten visitors a year—broken rocks everywhere—shade overhead, thick under foot with leaves—a just palpable wild and delicate aroma."

Black Pond, an oval sheet of water, about half a mile across, has as tributary Black Creek, the latter about a mile from Slabsides. The creek is called here the Shattega. "In it [said the Master of Slabsides] I get the moist, spongy, tranquil, luxurious side of Nature. Here she stands or sits knee-deep in water, and wreathes herself with pond-lilies in summer, and decks herself with scarlet maples in autumn. She is an Indian maiden, dark, subtle, dreaming, with glances now and then that thrill the wild blood in one's veins. The Shattega here is a stream without banks and with a just perceptible current. . . . The larger trees on each side unite

their branches above one's head, so that at times he seems to be entering an arboreal cave out of which glides the stream."

The water is so pure that one seems to be floating between two worlds. In late summer the naturalist went there to get white pond-lilies and the loose-strife, as well as the crimson cardinal flower.

The Master of Slabsides, before he built his chimney and fireplace, went around, he says, poking his head into old fireplaces to discover their secret. For the same purpose I poked my nose into books, as well, before I built mine at Birkenshaw, on Lake Kezar. He says the secret of a good non-smoking chimney "is to have the throat of the chimney long and narrow and the flue above very big." This is true so far as it goes, but only a part of the matter. In order to have the bottom of the flue large (I believe this is itself called the throat) you should slant forward the back wall of your fireplace. Then he does not seem to know the philosophy of the thing. It is this, as I look at it: the back of the fireplace is thrown forward so that with a large throat, or bottom of the chimney, the cold air that descends to take the place of the warm air that ascends shall not in its descent carry down the smoke with it out into the room. If the cold air doesn't impinge directly on to the fire, the smoke passes by and up with the warm air. This is my philosophy of it. I have heard some other additional subtleties on the subject.

Burroughs built Slabsides in 1895. In 1901 I put

up on the shore of the nine-mile-long, winding, supernally beautiful Lake Kezar, in Maine, a rustic cottage very similar to Slabsides, and equipped with home-made furniture like Burroughs's. (To Kezar, by the way, English lakes are mere duck-ponds. Kezar is only to be compared with the finer Swiss and Italian lakes, and I have seen them all, except Garda. This was also the opinion of James Bryce, the English author and mountaineer, who explored Kezar with great interest). Read Thoreau's poem on Monadnock and the Peterboro Hills and you get the sentiment of the region. When I first knew it, it was an unprofaned corner of the universe. The only settler my peninsula had ever had was a forgotten Indian. I found one of his gouges, or hide-scrapers, of stone on the lake edge,—a very pretty celt. I was one of the first two or three white pioneers and tourist discoverers of this matchless lake, and had great fun and adventure in rafting and boating all the material for my little houses—the roughest kind of splendid work. I came here (I am writing this at Birkenshaw) to mountaineer, and trim up my land with the ax, and not for the purpose of truck-gardening, which was Burroughs's purpose at Slabsides.

In 1902, I showed photographs to Burroughs of the interior of Birkenshaw (or Shingleshack, as I sometimes have humorously called it). I have never visited Slabsides, nor did I see any views of its interior until 1923. I am pleased to see that he had anticipated my plan of a rustic fireplace framework.

Necessity drove him to the same device as mine; namely, the need of some artistic relief to the hideous rudeness of the exposed chimney,* as well as the need of shelf-room. I see by Clifton Johnson's photograph, in his "Burroughs Talks," that John stacked his fireplace shelves with literary truck as I have done. He and I found, by the disagreeable experience of formidable battles with mice, and the nuisance of wood borers (worms) the mistake of putting bark in a dwelling-house. As for his yellow birch I can only say, while admitting its great beauty, that it is very dangerous in case of fire. His hickory chairs, and table-legs of sumach tridents were just the thing.

It may be of interest to friends of John o'Birds to compare respective building prices in New York State and in Maine. He does not inform us, I believe, what Slabsides cost him, partly because he was selling parts of its land again, and chiefly for the same reason, probably, that I am not going to give away the price I paid,—namely, because it was so little. I did most of the work on my various small buildings, to be sure; but an idea can be gained of the scale of prices in those days when I say that for cutting from the rough rock, and trans-

*A modest and manly democratic neighbor in his stone residence opposite me on Kezar-side (I refer to Mr. George S. Wright, the White House Coffee merchant), has solved the problem of beauty in his fireplace by a great panel of granite on its façade, across which runs diagonally a magnificent foot-wide vein of white native quartz in the rough. This would have greatly delighted Burroughs, as well as his makers of tires and auto-cars, Firestone and Ford.

porting a half mile to the cottage, of a massive gray gneiss lintel for the front of the fireplace at Birkenshaw, the total charge, for stone and all labor, was fifty cents! My carpenter at the raising of the main cottage framework got \$2.00 a day, and his assistants \$1.50. Lumber from the nearby sawmill was \$9.00 a thousand. This was in the ante-bellum days before Bottom and his fellows had dethroned Oberon and Titania, and the mechanics thrown up their caps for Debs, Gompers, and Trotzky, driving the intelligentsia to the wall in America and shooting them in Russia.

V
AS LETTER WRITER

V

AS LETTER WRITER

BURROUGHS'S letters to his son (see "My Boyhood") are couched in excellent vernacular, like the letters of Walt Whitman. They are full of sincerity and of shy affection, and good advice from a loving and anxious father to his son at Harvard. In his talks by word of mouth with his son, John had the frank naturalism of an old farmer in talking about his bulls and rams. He used to get rapped over the pate about this by his wife.

Here follow a few of John Burroughs's letters to me.

While perhaps not a letter writer of pronounced excellence and by choice, he could yet pen a good epistle when he chose. While I was attached to a Philadelphia literary weekly in 1880-1881, I used to go over across the Delaware to Camden to see Walt Whitman. Under date of February 20, 1881, Burroughs wrote to me:

"I felt pretty sure you would like W. W. when you came to know him. Take a good look at him; you will not see his like again.* I advise you to make notes of all the con-

*Of course not. But strange to say I did once see at the old Court Street coffee counter in Boston, in the days when I was an imbibor of that delicious poison, the exact counterpart of Walt Whitman, physically. A man of gigantic stature, noble and almost

versations you have with him, tho he does not talk so well as before his illness. I have known him well since '64, and loved him at first sight. I hope his health will speedily mend, for I had calculated on having him up here. He sent me the paper on the death of Carlyle. It is a lofty utterance and becomes him well. There is no other voice in America that could have sounded that strain. . . . Give my love to Walt and tell him I wish for him daily and nightly."

Nearly a year later Burroughs writes (Dec. 27, 1881):—

" . . . I enclose my photograph,—a little too smooth and well-tailored to be characteristic. I am more of a law-breaker than you would infer from that picture. . . . You are a famous walker, indeed! I never walked half as far. When you walked through the Catskills [in 1877] you probably went by my house, if you walked up from Newburg on the west side of the river. It has occurred to me several times that we must have a walk together, perhaps in the South, perhaps in England. It is a good thing to keep in mind. . . . I am breaking my head over bank ledgers these days, and all my literary work is in abeyance."

That long pedipulverous walk we never took; but after this we each separately walked much in rural England, he in the first half of 1882, and I in 1898 and in 1914. He alludes to his English walks in the following letter:—

scornful in the majesty of his mien; seemed as if he belonged to a superior race of men, was a specimen of the supermen who had survived some world catastrophe. I longed to ask him his name, feeling sure he would say, "Whitman."

"Esopus, N. Y., 1882

"Accept my thanks for your brief but acute paper upon myself in the *Californian*, just received. Your paper is discriminating, and touches the quick more than once. [I have never since that time been able to see a copy of this early skit of mine.] I myself think that the chief merit of my writings is in their cheeriness, healthfulness, and objectivity, and the success with which I keep myself out of sight. Thoreau could obtrude himself, and we like it; but I must be a transparent eyeball or nothing. [The self-analyses of Burroughs are sometimes singularly unsuccessful.] My essays on Emerson are both open to the objection you make—that both show too plainly the influence of the styles of the men they deal with. I shall write again upon these subjects some time, when I shall escape these faults. My Thoreau paper in *July Century* is not open to this criticism, is it? and a paper I am writing on Carlyle is not open to it.

"About shooting the birds, of course, I have not done that for years. The advice I give is to the young ornithologist mastering his subject. He can make *sure* and rapid progress in no other way. Thoreau's ornithology was always a little lame because [noble man!] he would not take the only sure means of identifying his bird. Yet I have always been more or less of a sportsman, and am yet. [If, as my dear friend, Henry S. Salt, says, they only wouldn't call it "sport" we should be able to forgive them a little more. "Hunter" or "killer" is the right word. I suppose "sport" is the euphemism their conscience gives the thing for a name.]

"I had a delightful time in England and Scotland, and used my eyes to much better purpose than before. I had many a tramp about both countries, and steeped myself well in the delicious land. I liked the Scotch best. They are a racy hospitable people. I spent a week in the land of Burns,

a week in Carlyle's country, a week in Wordsworth's country and five weeks in London, besides shorter stops here and there. How did you know I was in Ayrshire? We brought home an Ayrshire girl with us to rule the kitchen."

The fruits of this English jaunt are to be found in the fascinating volume "Fresh Fields." In his English walkings he had what was practically a totally unsuccessful hunt for the nightingale. When I went over in 1898 I obeyed his injunction to be sure to hear and see this famous bird of the European poets. I made studies of its song both in Italy and in England,—heard it by night and by day, and frequently saw it at closest range. I shall review Burroughs's English bird studies in the next section (VI), and I will only comment here on one other matter in "Fresh Fields." He finds the English high garden walls very annoying.

"About the first disgust the otherwise delighted American is pretty sure to feel on his arrival in Britain [he says], is when he finds himself snubbed along the highway by these high walls and high hedges. He wants to give his eyes free range into the fields, the woods, the inclosures of the fine house; but the bars are always up, and up just beyond the scaling point. The walls are of dressed stone laid in mortar, and capped with smooth tiles; and they define the highway to you and shut you in it with an emphasis that is insolent and irritating. One wishes for a sledge-hammer to smash their sharp crests, or batter a hole in their haughty sides. The more your view is shut out, the more you want to see in. What has the proprietor got behind there that he is ashamed of, or so choice of that he should be at such pains to exclude a harmless pedestrian's eyes?"

I noticed in Ruskin's book, "The Two Paths," a passage to which I called the attention of Mr. Burroughs in the *Nation* or the *Critic*, I forget which. It happily sums up, I think, about all that can be said in defense of the English garden and park wall.

"It [the wall] has, indeed [says Ruskin], often an unkind look on the outside, but there is more modesty in it than unkindness. It generally means, not that the builder of it wants to shut you out from the view of his garden, but from the view of himself: it is a frank statement that he needs a certain portion of time to himself, and must not be stared at when he digs there in his shirt-sleeves, or plays at leap-frog with his boys from school, or talks over old times with his wife, walking up and down in the evening sunshine. Besides, the brick wall has good practical service in it, and shelters you from the east wind, and ripens your peaches and nectarines, and glows in autumn like a sunny bank. And, moreover, your brick wall, if you build it properly, so that it shall stand long enough, is a beautiful thing when it is old, and has assumed its grave purple red, touched with mossy green."

A mossy wall! "High-walled gardens, green and old!" Nothing is more dear to my fancy than the absolute seclusion of a city garden, full of the stilly murmur of the winged folk—flower-scented, dreamy, peaceful. A high hedge is nearly as pleasing, altho the retirement afforded is less perfect.

In a note sent to me on Dec. 19, 1885, alluding to a pamphlet of mine on Whitman's style ("The Poet as a Craftsman," later embodied in my book on Whitman) Burroughs says:—

"I tried meter and rhyme and soon found I had no gift for them. Howells has done more and better in prose than he could ever have done in poetry. Holmes does well in both, as does Lowell. Coleridge is greater in prose than in verse. . . . It is true the swarms of lesser poets would be little or nothing without the stock forms; strip them of these, and their poverty of thought would be at once seen. But a great soul can make these old forms forever new and fresh. What would Burns be without them? Whitman has done nothing better or more powerful than "My Captain." [Damn "My Captain," said Walt once, annoyed by the incessant praise by the many of that little jingle.] But I would not have his other poems cast in this form. . . ."

In August, 1892, Burroughs sent me as a present a set of six little handsome paper-covered volumes, forming the Edinburgh vest-pocket edition of his works.

About this time—the first lustrum of the 90's,—he was consigning his grapes to a Boston fruit dealer, and sent us a basketful of the best new varieties. I responded with an impromptu rhythmic grind which follows. The lines are only doggerel. I had forgotten their existence till they fell out one day in the printed form from one of the Edinburgh booklets:—

ON RECEIVING A BASKET OF GRAPES FROM JOHN BURROUGHS

You who dwell in old Van Winkle's sleepy realm,
Sunny-hearted lover of the birds and poets,
Mid your vineyards, where, before your vine-hung mansion
Slowly rolls the broad-backed stream of Hendrik Hudson,

Where the blunt-faced drowsy bees make mellow music
 Round your bark-walled growlery and thinking shop,
 (Yet not one un-Greek growling page in J. B.'s opera,
 Each one a comb a-drip with thyme-fed honey of Hymettus),
 And your eaves and trees are vocal with the language of
 the birds—

'Tis plain Persephone, Demeter, Gā, and all the gods, are
 in your pay.

How the churlish, dour, and stern old mothers
 Love your homespun strength and woodcraft!

But what's your lamp, 'Aladdin, John?
 What the charm, O Cincinnatus of the Hudson?
 What the incantation necromantic
 That brings forth such grapes as these?
 Beware your namesake's fate of Salem,
 Who received, you mind, a *pressing* invitation
 From the grim old witchcraft judges.

Tush! away with such musty old fancies!
 And a health to good canny John Burroughs
 Who burrows the borough of West Park
 With such magical fruit-bearing furrows.

Mid vineyards of Erie and haunts of the sunny Catawba
 I've roamed in my youth, and eaten those grapes of the
 West;

But for perfume and richness of delicate flesh, John,
 Your new whites and purples are by all odds the best.

On Dec. 8, 1895, speaking of his writings on
 Whitman, he exclaims:—

“Whitman is so fluid and baffling that I am by no means
 sure I shall ever be at rest in my survey of him. Deep
 opens beneath deep, and his horizon lines recede as I
 approach.”

The truth is, I shrewdly suspect, that Burroughs was at this time not deeply enough read in the philosophies to comprehend the more profound Hegelian features of Walt's works. Hegel is the key to him, or Hegel diluted and interpreted by others. Burroughs had not at the time he made the foregoing statements written any, I believe, of his rehashes of contemporary philosophy and science. But if John Addington Symonds confessed himself floored in his attempt to interpret Walt (see the Preface to my "Whitman" where I quote a letter to me from Symonds), why should we wonder at the failure, partial failure, of a non-university man to accomplish the Herculean task? "The works of the great poets have never yet been read by mankind, for only great poets can read them," says Thoreau. But I add that no one is of much value in this world who does not at some time attempt the impossible. As it is, Burroughs's book is a very weighty performance. After this long interruption of our friend, let us permit him to resume his letter to me.

"I keep well. I am building a rustic home (Slabsides) on the rocks by my muck-swamp—a big stone chimney, which I am laying myself. I expect to spend much of my time there, and to entertain you there in the spring. It is great fun. We have found a spring there equal to the Carlsbad."

Here is a letter on the same topic as the foregoing, relating in part to his weighty book on Whitman:

October, 1896

"Dear Kennedy:

"I read your book [on Walt Whitman, published in Great Britain] at two sittings, and was mean enough to envy you some parts of it. [I sent him a copy of the book in August; his came out in November.] There are many strong and telling passages in it. It has in full measure what my book I see is deficient in,—a kind of crystallic edge or point to the sentences that cuts and penetrates, tho I regret you called Walt an old scamp, even playfully. My book, I fear, will seem over-weighted with literary and abstract considerations.

"I have been living since May at Slabsides, and enjoy it much. Shall stay here till cool weather. Lots of celery, but prices very low. A fine grape crop,—36 tons; prices fair."

As to my calling Walt playfully, an old scamp, the occasion was this: He had asked me to translate a paper by Sarrazin on him. I did so, hurriedly; and Walt, without asking my permission, goes and prints it in a big broadside, two feet by one and a half, with all its errors of typography on its head. Then, in his colossal ignorance of languages, in order to be sure neither of us had made a mistake, he goes and gets Dr. Bucke also to translate it, and prints the doctor's version in another broadside. Comment is unnecessary. But calling him an old scamp is nothing, for he discounted everything of this kind by admitting in his earliest writings that he had lied, stolen, was greedy, in fine had committed all the sins of the decalogue. In one of the printed birthday accounts (stenographic), Dr. Bucke tells

him to his face that he has in him all the elements of an Attila or a Cenci. Walt sat there and never turned a hair, did not deny it.

Burroughs loved Walt like a woman; but so did I.

This was *after* the little German Jew of Camden, and others of the Philadelphia set, had thrown the 1,000-candle-power search-light of their spyings on to their hero, and in that fierce glare revealed a good deal of his past. But Walt, nevertheless, came out of the ordeal only slightly scarred. He towered yet like a god. He had discounted it all in the "Song of Myself."

While summering in Derbyshire, in 1898, I received a good letter from Oom John. He says, under date of July 17:

"Your letter found Julian and I [Burroughs was often ungrammatical; his proofreaders had to look sharp after him] up here at the old home, where we expect to spend the rest of July, and maybe the first week of August. We shall be very glad to see you on your return, and keep you at Slabsides as long as you will stay. . . . Julian got good marks at Harvard, and expects to return in the Fall. He works in the hayfield here. I sit in the shade and look down upon him and the other boys at work, seeing myself again of forty years ago. I worked over these same fields in my youth. Give my love to [Edward] Carpenter. How I wish I was with you for a few days!

"With love,

"JOHN BURROUGHS."



PHOTO FROM "INTERNATIONAL"

"SLABSIDES"

John Burroughs's home in the woods



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JOHN MUIR

The naturalist of the West, greeting John Burroughs
on the latter's 75th Birthday

In a letter received in mid-March of 1904 he writes:—

“Take me up on any point in these papers that you can set me right upon. I welcome honest criticism. Mrs. B. has been in Poughkeepsie all winter [as often] boarding. She may come home next week. Julian’s family are all well. Elizabeth [one of Julian’s children] is a great institution. We are great cronies. J. is making furniture for his home—very good, too. This has been the coldest winter I ever saw. Best wishes to you both.”

The French gentleman (my long-time friend Léon Bazalgette of Paris and Normandy) alluded to in the following letter, has, as is now well known, translated all of Walt Whitman’s works into French, and written two most excellent works upon him in French, altho he also writes the best of English:—

“West Park, N. Y., *June 24, 1908.*

“I have not yet read Bazalgette’s book, tho he sent me a copy and wrote me a letter. A friend of mine will translate parts of it for me.”

John, like Whitman, knew not the tongues. It was better for him and for us, probably, that he did not. Perhaps he would have agreed with Professor Palmer of Harvard, that “enlarging one’s acquaintance with a foreign language is a happy way of wasting a large amount of time.” One can hardly think of him, with his inbred love of strength, speaking the mincing and flimsy French tongue, however much he must have admired the French

world-war hero. He would have detested it as much as did Alfieri, Coleridge, and Landor. Burroughs continues:

"You are hard on [Bliss] Perry [*in re* his book on Walt Whitman]. I like the man [so do I] and can forgive him the few mistakes he makes about Walt. His book is such an advance on what we had reason to expect from a college professor and an *Atlantic* editor that I am grateful for it. Such mistakes or perversions will not seriously affect Walt's fame. Traubel's books will do Walt much more harm."

Burroughs says, in Clifton Johnson's "Talks" (p. 171), that some one once wrote to him asking him to contribute an ache-penny to a purse to help Traubel go on writing. Burroughs replied, "He wrote such gush and rot I'd have given a purse to have him stop." We all felt that way. "It was just an intellectual dysentery," said Burroughs. Or as I wrote to Traubel once, "You have Walt's mannerisms without his message or his power." Traubel, it must be admitted, finally adopted a style of his own, but it was a style that made one blush. There was something the matter with his throat-latch. A dysentery of words—yes, that's what it was.

Burroughs continues:—

"I had a good time with Trowbridge in Florida last March. [He didn't like Florida itself, however.] I am well and loafing hard. Julian and family are all well. We plan a trip to salt water in our new motor-boat in July. [The trip was taken, out to the sea, or at least to Long

Island Sound, where, at Bridgeport they found trace of the Burroughs ancestors, apparently.]

“Slabsides, *April 19, 1913.*

“Bluebirds have been here nearly all winter. The other spring birds are all here, and arbutus, hepatica, dicentra, and rock cress are out. . . . Traubel’s notice of my book, ‘Time and Change’ [in the *Conservator*] amused me. The gospel of love is not a matter of words with me as it is with him [a keen thrust, that], I live the gospel.* See if you make any thing of my paper in April *Atlantic*. Greetings to Mrs. Kennedy.”

Mr. Burroughs’s friend, Henry Ford, gave him four auto cars in all. First and last John nearly broke his neck operating them. But he persevered to the end, and also accepted many invitations to ride with friends. On one of these occasions he left some of his friends at the foot of our steep hill in Belmont and ran up to see us. It is of these persons he writes as follows from West Park, May 26, 1913:—

“Your postal card beat me here by a day. The lady I brought to your house was Dr. Clara Barrus, an old and valued friend of mine. She is the woman who went to California with me, and to the Hawaiian Islands four years ago. She wrote an account of parts of the trip in the *Century* for August, 1910, called ‘John o’ Birds and John o’ Mountains.’ She expects to be my biographer. She is

*I should say that the best thing about Traubel was what was said of Lord Hartington—his you-be-damnedness. He was brave as a little lion.

an uncommon woman,—a man's tolerance and a woman's insight. The woman in the auto car was Mrs. [Albert] Van Buren, of Louisville, Kentucky, who spends her summers in Brookline [Mass.], and her winters in Florida. I spent part of a winter at her home in Florida on the St. John's [near the winter home of the Nixon Watermans, friends of ours and of Trowbridge and Burroughs]. She is a great friend of Trowbridge. The man was Mr. Bush, an educated person and attached to her household. He has a fine philosophical library. . . . I'm off on a fishing trip to-morrow to Sullivan County. Next week I go to Detroit for a week, to visit Mr. Ford. Dr. Barrus lives at Pelham, N. Y. Thursday I went down home with Dallas Lore Sharp, who has a farm at Hingham [Mass.]. I like him much. So would you."

Apropos of Burroughs as automobile driver, alluded to above, Dr. Barrus sends me this note (June 3, 1921):

"J. B. drove a car up to within three months of his death. On leaving home (November, 1920), he was using and driving his fourth Ford car, and in the main was a good driver, tho often taking more chances than an experienced chauffeur would take. 'I've learned that lesson,' he used to say. But there were many lessons to learn, and we had countless narrow escapes."

Hamlin Garland reports Burroughs speaking of the driving of his car as follows:—

"'It had me in the ditch once, and once I ran through the barn, but I've mastered it now' said he, pink and smiling, like an up-to-date Santa Claus, as he maneuvered his car into position before the door [of Garland's summer home in the Adirondack region]."

When John o'Birds was in Detroit visiting Henry Ford, they stood one day looking at the miracle of a-finished-car-a-minute pouring forth in a never-ending stream. Presently one a little finer in its finishing appeared. Mr. Ford said, "That is for you." Burroughs protested, but Ford said, "You need another. Giving away a car is no more to me than giving away a jack-knife would be to most men." I have only newspaper authority for this.

This car "proved to be a kicker," and broke Julian's arm. Neither father nor son seems to have known at that time that, to avoid the broken arm all you have to do, in cranking your car, is to stand and wind it with the left hand, on the left side of the crank. Then, if it kicks, it won't hit anything but empty air, because when it kicks forward to the right your left hand has already moved back out of the way. But hand-turned cranks are now out of use in all up-to-date private cars.

Here follows a pleasant letter which I must share with my readers in unabridged form. The reference to Knowles is to the man who created such an interest and excitement in New England by going alone and stark naked into the Maine woods, and maintaining himself there all summer in solitude by the methods of the primitive man. (See a discussion of this later in Part XIII.)

"Woodchuck Lodge, Roxbury, N. Y. *Sept. 28. [1913]*

"Excuse this machine work; but its keys under the hands of Dr. Barrus, are more nimble than my fingers. I motored

through Belmont about two weeks ago with Henry Ford and his family, to and from Boston and Concord, and thought of you and planned to pull you out of your retreat, but circumstances did not favor it. I spent a couple of hours with Trowbridge and Nixon Waterman, and heard of you through them. Mr. Ford is the man who gave me my car and took me on a week's tour through New England. We spent two days at Concord, and I got many new impressions of that historic town. Sanborn went about with us, and took us through the Emerson house.

I hope I will [*sic*] meet you in Italy; but if I don't, be sure that you keep your promise to come down or up the Hudson and seek me out at Slabsides. I am dreaming of spending the winter in Italy or somewhere on the shores of the Mediterranean; but there are several 'buts' in the way. If I could bundle my wife off with me I could soon settle the matter, but wife refuses to go. [The most serious thing I have against good Mrs. Burroughs is this of having kept us from the pleasure of seeing John Burroughs in foreign lands. What riches he would have brought home! *]

*Now, to forestall the wiseacres, who will certainly exclaim when they read the following long footnote, "Why, this fellow runs back a mile in order to take a step forward," I will ask them to remember that one of the chief charms of Jean Paul Richter are his *Extra-Blatts*. So I was just going to say that I make out a combined physiographic and ethnographic reason for all our travels and culture. If you will note, it nearly all relates to the East or Eastern culture. Why? For this reason; this is my philosophy of it: The earth turns from west to east. This tends to throw everything westward, just as the water on a grindstone whirls in the opposite direction to that in which the stone is turning. Westward, the course of empire has ever taken its way. Burroughs himself (following Thoreau, however) notes the curious fact that whenever we go out to take a walk we almost inevitably turn to the west, in the direction opposite to that of the turning earth. Burroughs has no explanation for it; but Thoreau says, "I believe there is a subtle magnetism in Nature, which, if we unconsciously yield to it, will direct us aright. . . . I turn round and round irresolute sometimes for a quarter of an hour, until I decide for the thousandth time that I will

The artist Knowles, to whom you refer, is unknown to me, and the articles in the *Boston Post*, of which you speak, I have not seen.

I hope to stay here at Woodchuck Lodge through October, if Dr. Barrus and my other friends do not desert me. An Italian artist is here now, painting my portrait; but this is the only affliction of the kind I have had or shall have this year, and I hope ever again. [He says that every year, and every year succumbs to their pleadings.—C.B.]

My new book will be out in October. If you have nothing else to read, see an article of mine in the *Yale Review* for October, one in the *Atlantic Monthly* for October, and one in the *Century Magazine*; also a short article on Fabre in *Good Housekeeping* for November.

Fraternally yours,

“JOHN BURROUGHS.

walk into the southwest or the west. Eastward I go only by force, but westward I go free” (“Walking”).

(Thoreau's lines, “The needles of the pine all to the west incline,” must be taken as a figure of speech only.)

I will add that I have all my life been pondering the curious parallel fact that the growth of so many great cities has been to the westward. It follows that, as cities naturally grow in wealth as time goes on, every great city has its wealthy quarter in the West End,—unless, like San Francisco, the city is on the ocean's edge, or some other insuperable obstacle interposes. Look at New York, London, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Paris, Rome, Constantinople, Boston, and too many Asiatic cities to mention. (Is my reasoning good, or mere fantasy?) Well, it follows that if you want to study the old civilizations—and that is where all our culture comes from—you must reverse the natural westward tendency of everything and travel to the East. Now, Mrs. Burroughs, not having the faintest scintilla of culture, not in fact knowing what it meant, seems to be responsible for depriving her husband and the world of the fine pleasure and profit he and we should have had if he had been encouraged by her to extend his travels to the old cultured cities of the Eastern hemisphere. As his letters to me show, he instinctively longed to go to Italy and Egypt; felt he needed a look at man's cradle, the old home. Every educated person feels the desire.

Again from Time's wallet I pick out a message from Oom John, dated Nov. 23, 1914 (West Park):—

“Thank you for your interesting letter. I had not heard that you had gone abroad. [Slip of memory. He wrote me when we were in Derbyshire, as the reader has seen. We talked it all over, and he was to try to meet us in Sicily or Rome. Speaking Italian with some fluency as I do, I could have been of great assistance to him; but he did not go over. His plan had been to go to Egypt first.] I envy you that summer in England. I often wonder if I will [shall] ever see that lovely land again. I spent the summer here and at Woodchuck Lodge in Roxbury, and throve fairly well; finished three or four essays. We came back here in October. We may spend part of the winter at Yama Farms Inn, in Napanoch, and then migrate to Georgia or Florida.

This hellish war has been like a nightmare to me, and as yet I read little but the newspapers; but I do not yet find what I want,—the news of the utter defeat of the German army. But it MUST come. I had a letter in the *New York Tribune* two weeks ago that freed my mind a little and that was well received. There is a summary of it in the current *Literary Digest*.”

During the winter of 1915-1916, Burroughs was in poor health and away from home, part of the time in the South. His friend, Mr. De Loach, writer of a brochure about him, entertained him for a time at Experiment, Georgia. While there he was too ill to look over his mail personally, as Mr. De Loach wrote to me; but he recovered spirits, and was back before the end of March at Riverby, whence he presently wrote as follows:—

"Your letter of the 26th found me at home boiling sap, in the open—great fun for me. I am quite well again, and hope I have learned how to keep so. I must stop writing for a long time and spend my time in the open air. We had a maple-sugar picnic on my birthday. We 'sugared off,' and ate 'lockjaw' from a snowbank with Julian and his family. I feel as you do about the hellish Germans. I wish they would force us into the war. We might have the lasting honor of helping to squelch this new eruption of barbarism. I expect they will finally get Verdun, but at a fearful price. I am expecting great things of Russia before long, and of England, too. . . .

"Every year, the 2d or 3d of June, I go fishing for a few days where a friend of mine has a fine trout stream . . .

"I doubt if I could read the books of Gene Stratton Porter. Has any woman ever written acceptably about nature?"

Apropos of that last remark of Burroughs I will just say that, having already had some confidential talk on dour old Uncle John, as Mrs. Porter calls him, I took the, perhaps, questionable liberty of telling her what he said about her work. She wrote to me:—

"If he will not read my work then he does not know whether it is good or not. I have brought from field and forest nearly five thousand straight natural-history negatives (chiefly of bird life) . . . I would wager all I am worth that I am intimately acquainted with the least detail of the home life of ten of our native birds to one of most of the men writers. It is a pose of many men to sneer at field-work done by a woman [by the boots and breeches route, to use one of Mrs. Porter's favorite epistolary expressions.]"

It is told me on good authority that, before he

died, Burroughs privately admitted, when he was out in California, that Gene Stratton Porter had done more for outdoor life and clean and decent living than any other of his contemporaries. A case of late conversion, apparently. If he didn't say that, he might truthfully have done so. I note that in his book "Riverby" he says (p. 96), "Women are about the best lovers of Nature, after all." So there you are. Millions of Gene's readers in every land, have been inspired for nature-study who never heard of John Burroughs. She has become a permanent resident of Los Angeles, and I fancy the old Sage of the Hudson might have taken up her books out there when he was her neighbor, and have seen their charm and value. Once more I say, if he didn't do so, he ought to have.

VI
STUDIES OF ENGLISH BIRDS

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JOHAN BURROUGHS'S descriptions in his "Fresh Fields," of things British are keen and incisive and humorous,—not so weighty and human as Emerson's "English Traits," which are like "rich preserves, a pound of Emerson to a pound of John Bull," but as a whole accurate in their more limited range, tho often mere tentative studies, the result of his too rapid and superficial survey of the field. Not being a linguist, and hence at a disadvantage in Paris, his sketches of French life in this volume, are not very deep, yet witty and breezy. In what racy English he writes, for example, of the whip-cracking nuisance in Paris! The French, he says, "always give this extra touch. Everything has its silk snapper. What French writer ever goaded his adversary with the belly of the lash, like the Germans and the English, when he could blister him with its silken end, and the percussion of wit be heard at every stroke?"

But I must go a little more into detail on the topic of English birds, especially the nightingale.

Burroughs had two great aviaries,—one in America and one in Great Britain. But in neither of his aviaries, needless to say, were the birds ever chained or in cages, as often on the continent of

Europe. The free forests and fields were their home, and there he studied them. He always regretted, however, one very serious gap in his studies of English birds: he failed practically to see and hear the nightingale, at least to any purpose, as he admits. This is a great pity, for, as he says, in the lark and the nightingale all that is characteristic in the other songsters is gathered up and carried to perfection. He says he heard here and there single notes of the nightingale, enough to give him an idea of the quality of the song. But, poor man! he heard even this much for less than five minutes altogether.

I feel that in giving a condensed account of my adventures in the study of the nightingale, I am not only filling a regrettable gap in his studies of birds, but am performing a duty to him and to his readers. For, strange to say, no complete study of the nightingale has ever been made, no literary account of the bird been rendered. The bird books, of course, have their brief perfunctory scientific descriptions, such as the very brief, but wholly inadequate, description by Frank M. Chapman in his "Camps and Cruises." But that is not what I mean. Sitting in my study in Stonecroft one day, Burroughs laid upon me the injunction to be sure to hear the bird sing both at night and by day. I replied in Eastern phrase, "I hear and obey."

Accordingly, when, on April 15, 1898, I found myself in that little Eden of roses and strawberries and palms,—Hyères, on the Provençal coast,—I

inquired at once about the "rossignol." The refined and gracious landlady assured me that it was too early yet for it. It is, indeed, too early for this rare bird to tarry in any of the Latin countries in its northward flight from beyond the blue Mediterranean, unless it likes to simmer in a pot and be digested by some big featherless scoundrel in the land of *si* or *oui*; for the markets of southern Europe are well-stocked with the dead bodies of all the peris of the air, not even omitting the tiny goldcrest (shocking to relate). The bishop and the convents of Capri derive the greater part of their income from the fifty thousand or so of quails they catch in their nets during the spring and autumn migrations. At Pompeii, on April 20, I asked a podgy German, who had just come from Capri, whether he had heard the nightingale there. "*Ach! ja, ja, gewiss!* Two weeks ago, mein Herr." And then, rolling his eyes and fondling his hands, he went into raptures over the beer (!) of his Capri hotel, and nothing more about my bird could I draw from him. At Rome I had been looking at the torsos of Greek sculpture and at Roman architecture, and had for the time being, forgotten the nightingales, or, rather, was expecting to hear them later. On the morning of May 2 I had trundled leisurely out over the Campagna to Tivoli by the earliest train, an hour or so in advance of the slug-a-bed tourists, and was loitering down the cool ravine of the falls, on the side still unsmitten by the morning sun, watching the white water-smoke of the cataract

shooting out from between the green walls of the chasm, and admiring the thin snow-white streamlets trickling over slopes of turf at one side of the gorge, when suddenly I was thrilled by a bird-note entirely new to me (and I had been hearing birds in England), and of distinguished quality. "The nightingale!" was my inward exclamation. Altho I had not as yet heard its characteristic trill, I felt that such a sound could come from but one bird,—the bird it had been one of my objects in coming to Europe to hear and see. The long concert which this bird gave me held me spell-bound; but I fear I was somewhat dazed by the unexpectedness of it all, and had to hear others a little later in the neighboring Villa d'Este before my enthusiasm grew to a white heat and I could do full justice to the joyous warble. Artistic and other emotional folk habitually exaggerate their experiences. An English lady, who burst into tears on hearing for the first time the note of a nightingale in her aviary, wrote thus of it: "There suddenly shot up to the ceiling, and away up to heaven, such a note—a clear, full, prolonged note of such unutterable sweetness and liquid music—as the dullest ear capable of receiving sounds could never confound with any other earthly tone. It was a note of pure, ineffable triumph." Now, on the contrary, I have heard single notes from the blackcap, the throstle, the American Southern mocking-bird, and the brown thrasher, quite equal to the best of the nightingale's,—which, by the by, is itself called a mocking-bird. Still there is an in-

effable passionate something, a genius-quality, an individual old-rose elegance in the nightingale that makes its song unique in the world. I have heard the American Southern mocking-bird (*Mimus polyglottus*) in the open fields and tree-tops, and agree with others that while the song is powerful in its tones, and superb, it yet lacks feeling altogether and is a mere intellectual performance. The bird is only a mimic, while Philomela is much more than that, and no amount of orange-grove and moonlight setting can make the mocking-bird's rollicking bravura equal its song.

In the hedge bordering a pretty sunken road near Hadrian's Villa by Tivoli I had a good view of one of the birds close at hand. It is about the size of our bluebird, not so large as I had expected; a trig and cosy little fellow, the back and tail a vivid cinnamon, the smooth breast and throat dull white, eyes red (more so than our red-eyed vireo's), and an open trustful glance like that of the English robin. Nightingales are not half so shy as the elusive black-cap; indeed, are quite fearless of men. My bird in the hedge scolded me a trifle with a pretty little rattle and chatter, but was a very joyous, human, and canny creature, not at all loony or melodramatic. He does not strike a melancholy attitude as he sings, nor roll his eye in a fine frenzy. He is not responsible for the fact that the poets have been misrepresenting him and caterwauling about him for so many centuries. Whatever he may seem by moonlight or when he sings darkling, here in the hot sun-

shine he is just a jolly, lively, every-day birdling, who wants to know why you are prowling around and making such a fuss over him, and lets you know pretty plainly that you had better be off and mind your own business.

But the song. What I heard first were two or three slurred whistles; then the unique trill, or shake,—“dear, dear, dear, dear, dear,” or, “te, te, te, te, te”—the syllable repeated with great rapidity from five to twenty times, this part of the strain sometimes husky and of needle-like fineness. It is the only part of the polyglot performance to which the epithets “intense” and “passionate” can strictly be applied. The rest is a medley of mocking-bird music,—gurgles, or water-bubbles; whistles; a rapid “too, too, too, too”; and canary trills and bell-like tones, reminding one of the American chat. In the *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1902, “Llinos Eglinton” gives in musical notes what she (or he) asserts to be the song of the nightingale in a complete version of its phrases taken down at Mentone in musical notation, as the bird sang (at four o’clock in the morning). It is a little suspicious to me that the characteristic passionate trill, on a dead level of notes, does not appear in the notation at all, and when it was played to me on the piano I did not recognize the song. The bird may have been the blackcap—often mistaken for the nightingale.

My bird by the falls at Tivoli sat on a bough in plain sight, and sang for me perhaps ten minutes. “What bird is that,” said I in Italian to a *ragazzo*,

who was boring me by furtively dogging me for the *soldo* which that particular morning I was perversely inclined not to bestow.* "*Le rossignol*," said the lad, promptly. (Mark the French. I had expected "*Il rosignuolo*"; but I had learned that many of these little Italian monkeys of pages and errand-boys speak French.) As the bird sang I could see by the rippling of the feathers the flex and throb of the full throat. As in the case of our white-eyed vireo and the Japanese robin, one is struck by the disproportion between the diminutive size of the nightingale and its loud song. The old writers notice this. "Is it not a wonder that so lowde and cleere a voice should come from so little a bodie?" says Philemon Holland. And Izaak Walton thought it almost miraculous that so small a bird could "breathe such sweet loud music out of her little instrumental throat."

While I was listening, there in Tivoli, I moved forward a step or two, whereupon a bird flew out of a bush within arm's reach. Of course this meant a nest, and I peeped in and saw four green eggs lying at the bottom of a nest of mud and plant débris. It was the nest of the ouzel, or merle (the English blackbird), and constructed precisely like the nest of its American counterpart, our robin-thrush. The

*I wanted to be alone, as I did, also, one morning later in Florence by Landor's villa, where I felt a violent inclination to repeat Landor's act and throw two garlicky, full-fed persistent beggar rogues down into his garden into another violet bed. But oh, the remorse I always suffer for years afterward when I think of some poor man or woman whom I fear I should have given tip or gratuity to, and did not!

nightingale builds on the ground. I did not see her nest, but learn from description that the framework surrounding the central cup of rootlets is usually of last year's leaves placed edgewise. The neat cinnamon-backed bird in her nest of chestnut or oak leaves, amid bramble or wild-rose roots, must form a pretty picture.

In the cool shade of the water-haunted Villa d'Este at Tivoli the nightingales warble and trill the whole day long. I heard there half a dozen, now singing all at once, and now answering one another from distant points. The air rang with the melody, now soft and low and almost inaudible, and now triumphant, passionate, tempestuous, and piercing with starling power to the very soul, especially when they sang, as they often did, right over my head in their leafy coverts. As the sun mounted higher and the heat increased, the music waxed louder and more joyous, realizing perfectly the description by Sophocles of the nightingales in the grove of Colonos. For here at last I saw Plato's Academe and the antique gardens realized. One could almost think that Pirro Ligorio had had the younger Pliny's description of his estates in hand while laying out this villa (1549) for his employer, the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este. The whole place is a Spenserian or Tennysonian paradise of verdure and living water, forming the most poetical garden in Europe, probably,—partly through its situation on a steep hill-slope, with a view of distant Rome far away over the Campagna, and partly owing to the picturesque semi-

ruin into which it has been allowed to lapse (much to the regret of the Baedeker writers); nature and art happily mingles, the art made beautiful in its decay by living moss and flowers, by songs of birds, by trailing vines, umbrageous trees, and the innumerable rose. As you emerge from the deserted palace and stand at the head of the white stone stairway, by the retaining wall (covered with little white perfumed Banksia roses) of one of the long terraces, the whole steep slope of the villa garden is seen beneath you, like the wood in Comus into which the shepherd looked down, or like the enchanted forest of Oberon and Titania. It is the one place of all on earth for the playing, on a summer's evening, of Comus or the Midsummer Night's Dream. Look at the high walls, green with mold and with clinging plants; or see the many fountains, or the waterfalls of the Anio there on the right, now in the spring spate roaring like hungry lions or darting down through their artificial confines with the resistless power and muscular roll of pythons. Far off, closing the vista down a shaded walk, is a mutilated statue of a man with sad and thoughtful face (probably Seneca), as if he were the embodied genius of the antique world meditating here in its last refuge. Wander down by this narrow ruined water-basin, well-nigh an eighth of a mile long, fed by a hundred streamlets from a duplicate basin above the time-worn griffins, eagles, and fleur-de-lis that cap its front, and every foot of its carved stonework thick with moss and green mold or covered with creeping

grass and maidenhair fern. You turn a corner, and see a winged Pegasus of time-gnawed stone, his forefeet in air, the body poised in the act of soaring. Here are avenues of trimmed box higher than one's head; clumps of three hundred-year-old black cypresses (with the foliage of the cedar), their slender spires towering over all; elder-trees thirty feet and more in height; orange-trees a plenty; and high aloë-trees, the fragrant leaves of which are being plucked off in baskets to be sold. Yonder are great water-tanks, their corner pillars topped by vases of crimson flowers. And everywhere grottoes and fountains, with backgrounds of ruined sculpture and dripping plants.

I suppose no one will deny that such a place as this forms an ideal setting for the warblings of the poets' bird? The birds always discover these spots where water is abundant and the shotgun forbidden.

While lying in the grass, amid blood-red poppies, under the olive-trees below Hadrian's Villa, I had another enchanting concert of nightingales; it seemed to me there were a dozen birds caroling at once. Thence wandering rather aimlessly on through the fields of the *contadini*, I stepped down into a cool bower of verdure in a ravine through which purled a stream of clear water. The rocky walls of the grotto were hung with ivy and frescoed with green lichens. Just the place for a dryad or water nymph, I thought,—when suddenly, almost by my head in the branches, a hidden nightingale began to sing. Some one had carved a little arched fountain in the

side of the wall, and, being heated, I took as quietly as possible a long draught, and then sat down to the feast of the sense of hearing and of the imagination. But mark the comical anticlimax. My bird had stopped singing, and as I listened for him to begin again the stillness was broken and my nerves startled by an awful near-by roar, like a clap of thunder in a clear sky. It was the long, remorseless, blood-curdling bray of a jackass. As usual it was at once taken up by melancholy brother-jackasses far and near over the Campagna, in this field and that, until the welkin rang. The bird had no inclination for further song.

I heard Philomel's delicate flute of silver again in Florence; namely, in the orchard behind Donatello's tower at the Villa Montauto of Hawthorne, and across the valley on the slope of Fiesole at the Villa Landor, and at Como; also, during the first week in June, again and again in southern England. At Como, standing at the hotel window at three o'clock in the morning, I could hear the nightingales singing loud and cheerily in the darkness,—from "tawny body and sweet small mouth feeding the heart of the night with fire." The night-warbling is simply the irrepressible outflow of the bird's gay-heartedness, who must always be talking, be it night or day. If you clap your hands and interrupt their singing, they will almost at once begin again. I was not specially impressed by the night-song at Como, tho it seemed very strange and pleasing. In a romantic mood and by moonlight, I felt that one could easily

be intoxicated by the song of this bulbul o'erbrimming the vales of night with melody. At such a time we seem to inherit a realm in which the dreams of poetry and romance are realities and the everyday world a dream.

"Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy."

But imagine the conditions changed. Suppose the birds plentiful here in the United States, and we nervous Americans obliged to listen to them under our windows every night, for two months at a time; would they not then be voted a nuisance?* It is bad enough to be wakened at three o'clock all summer by our present birds. If one is to be kept unwillingly awake, sleepy and cross, what matters it whether it be nightingales or cats that keep up the racket? We are told that Edward the Confessor was much disturbed in his nightly vigils by garrulous nightingales; they were too gay to suit his ascetic mood. I could cite numerous cases of complaint by English people of our times about the nocturnal noise of the creatures. The genial Andrew Lang, for instance, who seems to be a light sleeper, finds their noise "deplorable," and cites an English political economist who speaks wrathfully

*Our yellow-breasted chat, of the South, is a persistent night-singer, but is not so loud as to make himself a nuisance, so far as I have heard.

of "the d——d nightingales." Not only do they themselves sing, but occasionally wake up other birds. On moonlight nights in southern England, hour-long concerts by all the birds in a neighborhood have been heard, which, it was noticed, were started by the nightingales. So it seems the English birds, as well as the people, have a case against these foreign *meistersingers*, as the birds of Persia had against the bulbul for disturbing their slumber. When the bulbul was brought before Solomon, however, he was acquitted, for he pleaded that it was his love for the rose that made him sing. No Oriental could resist that plea.

When the nightingale "unloosens the long chain of his melodious thoughts" in the presence of other birds then in song, you perceive at once the unrivaled quality of the tones, the fire and fervor of the execution. He has a wonderful crescendo, ending, in a single high note; and certain other notes are piercing, showered out like fine spray. Yet "liquidity" perhaps best describes the tone-quality,—a clear liquid-sweet music like the gurgle of water. Power is not perhaps the characteristic feature of the carol. There is in it, however, the power of a prima donna's high notes and her sweetest and lowest tones, and the power of a mellow Mexican flute in the hands of a master. That which distinguishes the song from that of other birds is the initial trill,— "te, te, te," etc. (There is also an occasional "quee, quee, quee" trill, on a lower scale.) It is this peculiar and passionate shake or trill that other birds try to

imitate. It is what one might imagine the singing of happy Lilliputian hens in fairyland might be. It resembles the continuous whistle (at its best) of our white-throated Peabody bird, tho the notes do not rise and fall as do those of this sparrow, but are uttered all on a level and with no acceleration,—only, when the singer is energetic and impassioned, with a slight increase of intensity toward the close. In the nightingale's husky sinking of the voice, as if he were overcome with excess of emotion, the tones sometimes become almost as low as the whisper of the American cedar-bird. At Tivoli I wrote in my note-book; "The nightingale almost invariably begins his carol with the trill, which usually consists of nine or ten 'te's', but occasionally of thirty to forty, with a tremolo often perceptible. You think during these longer trills: 'He will surely drop exhausted. Will he never stop? What wind he has!'" It is a kind of intoxication of rapture. It is this of which Tennyson writes,—

“(The) nightingale delighteth to prolong
Her low preamble all alone.”

At Uffington, in Berks, near the home of Jeffries, I wrote, while the bird sang close by, "The trill does seem, in this case, when impassioned and prolonged, not melancholy, but slightly pensive; a kind of deep quivering passion in it, at any rate." And this is what we should expect; for the bird is highly organized, nervously. An English lady had a nightingale that, if startled or offended by being suddenly

seized, always fell into a kind of ecstasy, neither moving nor making a sound for half an hour or more. It is said that captive nightingales will fret themselves to death if excelled in song. English bird-catchers are well aware that they must capture the male bird before he has mated, or he will pine to death. So I say, the bird being so sensitive and refined, we should expect, notwithstanding its optimism and light heart, to hear the quiver of passion, merging into the pensive, in its voluptuous love song. "There is a gloom in deep love as in deep water; there is a silence in it which suspends the foot; and the folded arms and the dejected head are the images it reflects. No voice shakes its surface; the Muses themselves approach it with a tardy and a timid step, and with a low and tremulous and melancholy song" (Landor). But please to note the difference between this deep human love and that of our bird: the lover is perpetually melancholy, the bird only occasionally and slightly pensive; its spirit is not that of Shelley or of Poe, but that of Horace, or Burns. The trill is sometimes as passionate and intense as the husky song of the American Indigo bird, but as a whole is, nevertheless, as cheerful as that of the chaffinch or the Baltimore oriole. People impute to it their own moods. Keats, for instance, speaks of its "plaintive anthem," and C. A. Johns, author of the excellent one-volume bird manual, affirms that to him the trill of the nightingale is "the most painfully melancholy sound in nature." He is not followed in this by other recent writers. It would

seem as if on certain sets of nerves there are strains of music that act just as the lugubrious tones of a brass horn do on the Corti's fibers of a dog's ear, making him howl. John Muir was amused to find that California squirrels and birds would listen by the hour to cheerful whistling, but invariably scampered away in dismay when he whistled Old Hundred!

Keats, in his "Ode to the Nightingale," speaks of it as in full song in mid-May. So does Tennyson, in "Balin and Balan":—

"The nightingale, full-toned in middle May,
Hath ever and anon a note so thin
It seems another voice in other groves."

Tennyson rightly places its first arrival from the Continent in April:—

"When first the liquid note beloved of men
Comes flying over many a windy wave
To Britain and in April suddenly
Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with green and gold.

. . . there is the nightingale."*

*If you want to read a poem that sings as the nightingale sings, read aloud Tennyson's "In the Garden at Swainston," written under the influence of deep emotion, while listening to the carols of this bird in the grounds of his friend, Sir John Simeon, then lying dead in the house. He has caught from the bird itself the very swing of the voluptuous Lydian melody, and made it subserve the luxury of grief:—

"Nightingales sang in the woods—
The master was far away;
Nightingales warbled and sang
Of a passion that lasts but a day.
Still in the house in his coffin
The prince of courtesy lay."

My latest record in England for the little traveling minstrel is June 5, when one sang for me for half an hour as I lay at the roots of a big elm by a copse in the White Horse Vale. He had other appreciative listeners in two sentimental schoolgirls, who shyly hid themselves amid the perfumed branches of a blossoming hawthorn and listened to the descant as long as it continued.

In Florence, in the Trossachs, in Grasmere, and in the Peak of Derbyshire, I was repeatedly plagued by other birds mimicking the nightingale. At last I caught my Derbyshire pseudo-nightingale in the very act of his plagiarism, or at least saw him clearly enough, as he flew, to detect one of the black-caps whose haunt I knew.

As for Shakespeare, altho Warwickshire is supposed nowadays to be in the nightingale belt, he gives no evidence that he knew anything about the bird except from hearsay. That he lets his *Portia* in the "Merchant of Venice" speak of it as if it were merely a nocturnal singer is only one of many proofs of this.

The actual nightingale and the nightingale of poetry have little in common. With two or three exceptions, the poets all sing of a she-nightingale, as most ladies amusingly speak of the family tom-cat as "she." But it is of course the cock-nightingale that sings, and not the hen. Milton, in his verses on the bird, is twice wrong and twice right about the gender; and so is Tennyson. Their nightingale has no sex. This would not matter if it were a question

of something inanimate. But the very core of the matter in the case of an impassioned bird-song is that it is the love-warble of the wooing male.* Then for two thousand years and more the poets have been calling the Daulian bird "melancholy," and (following the Persians) have pictured "her" as lackadaisically "leaning 'her' breast up-till a thorn" and moaning out "her" song, whereas, as I have hinted, the real song is the embodiment of joy and the bird itself is in perpetual good spirits. It is, further, not solely a night-singer (tho its name signifies as much), as all the poets except Dryden assume, but emphatically the musician of the bright day, too. The trouble has been that the human singers, in writing of their famous brother-singer of the feathered hand and throbbing throat, have taken their imagery at second-hand. Keats's marvelous ode on this songster is confessedly the best. Next in beauty of classic phrase comes Milton ("the night-warbling bird," "where the Attic bird thrills her thick-warbled notes the summer long," "the wakeful bird that all night long her amorous descant sung," the bird that "sings darkling and in shadiest covert hid"); then Shelley "The Woodman and the Nightingale"; and lastly, Tennyson, if we may

*One can easily perceive, however, after seeing and hearing this bird and comparing it with, say, our brown thrasher, or even the Southern mocking-bird, why it has been spoken of as "she"; the delicacy of form and action and voice all give it a feminine cast, contrasted with the loud-masculine tones and ways of the other birds just mentioned.

properly cite his rare lines on the Eastern nightingale, the bulbul:—

Not he, but something which possessed
The darkness of the world,—delight,
Life, anguish, death, immortal love," etc.

Coleridge's second and maturer poem on this bird is studied from life:—

"A melancholy bird! Oh, idle thought!

.

'Tis the merry nightingale
That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates
With fast thick warble his delicious notes,
'As he were fearful that an April night
Would be too short for him to utter forth
His love-chant, and disburthen his full soul
Of all its music."

So are the following lines of Aristophanes:—

"Oh Jupiter! the dear delicious bird!
With what a lovely tone she swells and falls,
Sweetening the wilderness with delicate air."
The Birds, Frere's translation.

D'Annunzio, in his "Innocente," gets very close to the heart of the matter of the nightingale's song, tho he imputes his own melancholy to it:—

"From the first note it resembled an outburst of jubilant melody, a cascade of trills which fell upon the air with a sound as of pearls rebounding from the glass of a harmonica. Then there came a pause. A brilliant warbling arose, prolonged to a marvelous length, as if in a trial of

strength, in a mood of defiance, as a challenge to an unknown rival. A second pause. A theme of three notes, like an interrogative phrase, passed through a chain of dainty variations, repeating the timid request five or six times, modulated as tho on a slender flute of reed, or a pastoral pipe. A third pause. The song became an elegy; it changed to a minor key, grew soft as a sigh, faint as a sob, full of the sadness of a solitary lover, a heartfelt longing, a vain expectation; it burst forth into a final appeal, startling, shrill as a cry of agony; then it died away. Another and a more solemn pause. Then a new note was heard, which sounded as tho it could not issue from the same throat, it was so humble, timid, mournful; it resembled so closely the chirping of newly hatched birds, the twitter of baby sparrows; then with a marvelous volubility this ingenuous accent changed into a progression of notes, ever faster and faster, which sparkled in a flight of trills, vibrated in clearest warbling, soared aloft in audacious passages, now fainter, now louder, rising to soprano heights. The songster was intoxicated with his own song."

In his famous, but unsuccessful "Hunt for the Nightingale," Burroughs came across the Blackcap, its great rival. It is a very shy bird indeed. It simply will not be seen, even tho it be heard singing very loudly. Burroughs damns the song with faint praise, a thing that astonishes me. I heard it soon after I had repeatedly heard the nightingale in many localities, and I must say in all seriousness that I place the blackcap, in quality and bravura of performance close by that bird's side. In the gardens and fields of the Riviera he is very common. In Surrey, about June 1, I found the caroling at its best. On account of his black hood the Germans call

this black-plumaged vogel *Der Mönch* (the Monk). The male, like our warbling vireo, sometimes sings as he sits on the nest. They are solitary birds, are the blackcaps (I never saw two together), and retreat and retreat into the dense foliage of the tree-tops, ever fleeing as you pursue, stumbling over roots and stones, straining your eyes in vain, and craning your neck till it aches. In mere tone-color, or clang-tint, I should call the voice of the blackcap the most distinguished voice in all the choir. The nightingale has no single note louder, sweeter, wilder, nor is all of the nightingale's song so joyous, tho delivered with equal verve. I am referring now to the ringing vivacious talk, or shout, that accompanies the blackcap's desultory tree-flights. It seems as if he were positively trying to articulate words. Every day for a week or two, when I passed a certain wood near Chatsworth, in the first week in July, I would hear a blackcap whose splendid phrase, wild and sweet, rang out, as I was astonished to hear, for all the world like the words "punkin eater, punkin eat"! The bird's more formal song is a varied and extremely beautiful gush of melody, full of soft and gentle modulations. They are rare in the Midlands. I saw but three there. But in the southern shires I was often charmed by the blackcap, and as often baffled in my attempts to see it while it was singing.

After rather prolonged attempts to get something full and authoritative out of Burroughs's notes on English birds I finally reached the unwilling con-

clusion that his notes are quite fragmentary, and, altho brilliant and true in spots, on the whole unsatisfactory. Where he spent hours in the study of a certain bird, I spent weeks. Consequently I do not feel that he speaks *ex cathedra* to me. As for one individual's judgment on a bird over another's, it is not of much importance either way. The best way is to compare notes of different students. So much depends upon when and where you hear a bird. Much depends upon the bird's own mood and condition. And much depends upon your own mood and state of health.

Burroughs evidently did not hear the Garden Warbler to much purpose. He gives it a word or two of careless talk. Here again he astonishes me. A garden warbler who was helping his mate build a nest used to come a dozen times a day to pull white threads from the scarecrow rags on the pea-sticks in front of my chamber window. He was the gayest little chap that ever I saw, incessantly exploding his brisk crackle of wren-music, bobbing around so industriously the while, pulling and pulling, standing on his head if need were, and so naïve and cunning withal that I longed to have him in my hand to caress. He had a drab back and whitish-gray breast, and two little white feather-bunches each side of his throat. It is thought to be difficult to distinguish the garden warbler's carol from that of the blackcap. It is so: the long and deliciously varied warble of the garden bird is very similar to

the blackcap's. Yet I think if I were blindfolded and brought near the two, after recent hearing of them, I could instantly pick out the garden warbler by the greater eagerness and rapidity and slightly superior sweetness with which his notes are uttered.

Our friend of Riverby did not hear the Woodlark at all, he says. It is indeed much rarer than its brother the skylark. I saw only one or two. It is called the "lulu" bird, from its notes. It also soars, and sings as it soars. In fact, it is so much like the laverock as to be generally confused with it. The woodlark excels its brother in liquidity of tone. It perches on trees; the skylark does not. Further, in its soaring it rises in spirals (what the falconers call *towering*), fetching a great compass round and round the field as it rises. It was by this habit that I was enabled to identify it. George Meredith in a fine poem on the lark (highly praised by Lafcadio Hearn) makes the mistake of confounding the woodlark and the skylark.

Meredith says of the skylark:

"He rises and begins to round."

Not at all. The skylark mounts in a course that approaches the perpendicular. He rises as if he were climbing a swaying aerial ladder or were spinning a series of loops. It is the woodlark that soars in a spiral, beginning "to round" at the very start.

I agree with John Burroughs that the English Wren in its song is of equal rank with our winter

wren. (A matchless bird is our winter wren, by the way. Its song is so seldom heard, unless one is a mountain climber, that few know anything about it.) The English wren shuttling along through the branches of the trees is in color like a dead leaf. Amid the winds and rains of winter, if it is not excessively cold, he still sings, hardier by far than man and fuller of good cheer. Winter nights he sleeps in haystacks and green holly-trees, and by day hunts for spiders and flies in the farmer's barn and shed. His trilling song is sure death to melancholia. One soon learns to distinguish its steady eager push. The "tick-tack" talk, the "skate, skate, skate," the rattle, and the canary trills, come from him with an energy that stamps him as a creature quite able to take care of himself. The song ends with one or two unemphatic notes, matching in this our long-billed marsh-wren's stave. And, oddly, the English wren flies just like that bird, both species buzzing along in level flight as if they were humming-birds. Still odder is it to find that the male wrens in England are as shifty and cunning as the long-billed marsh-wren in the building of false nests ("cock nests" the Britishers call them), that the true nest containing the eggs may have a better chance of escape. It is pleasant in mid-July, when most other birds are songless, to hear the wren still singing. One day I was puzzled by a sound from an elm-tree top which resembled the hum of the seventeen-year locust: it turned out to be the prattle of a family of young wrens.

John o' Birds says that the notes of the Song-thrush "are never to his ear melodious" (his words). Well, that settles it! He tells us that the only music that he ever played was that of the jew's-harp. One can well believe it. No music in the song of the thristle! Why its very name is *Turdus musicus*. C. A. Johns truly says that it is scarcely less melodious than the nightingale. When from some chosen perch at evening the virile song of this bird rings out loud and sweet, flooding valley or hill with a music that intoxicates the sense and drowns thought in delight, one would think that the stupidest bumpkin on earth would stop spellbound, and that the very sap in the trees would thrill and leap quicker through its channels. The nightingale, being a rare bird and found only in about a fourth or fifth of British territory, and a mere summer visitant at that, one incurs no danger of contradiction in calling the song-thrush the unrivaled master of the company of native birds, the singer that gives more pleasure to the square mile than any other bird in the kingdom. This would be true if he only sang in summer; but he doesn't migrate, and sings more or less in the winter, too. Listen in the silver coolness of dusk in this Tempe-vale by the purling brook: there are three or four thrushes over yonder singing at once. How the notes ring as they run off the chromatic scale, now up, then down, and pulling the tremolo stop now and then. What dashing bravura in the medley; and now at evening a marked increase in liquid sweetness of tone. One

listens almost breathless, the nerves soothed and tranquilized by the rich minstrelsy. Every throstle in England is worth his weight in gold, both for his music and for his value to the horticulturist and farmer.

The *idée fixe* of John o' the Catskills is that there is no place like his home locality, and there are no birds, anywhere in the world equal to those of his native hills. He gives but grudging praise to any English or Hawaiian or Jamaican bird. But even he is swept away from his tiresome provincialism by the English Robin-Redbreast. Yet he gives so meager an account of it that I am tempted to go beyond my last and fill in some color in his meager pencil-sketch. It is too bad to get only the couple of dozen lines about this famous little household divinity of English childhood that Burroughs gives us, tho his sketch is true to the life.

He says: The bird "is a better songster than I expected to find him. . . .

"His favorite hour for singing is the gloaming, and I used to hear him last of all. His song is peculiar, jerky and spasmodic, but abounds in the purest and most piercing tones to be heard. . . . It stops and hesitates, and blurts out its notes like a stammerer; but when they do come they are marvelously clear and pure."

So far, Mr. Burroughs. If I myself were asked to say which I thought to be the most interesting of English birds, and the one with most variety in

his song, I should name the robin-redbreast. You are apt to make his acquaintance in some such way as this: you are walking under the green trees by the roadside, say, after a shower, when suddenly the silence is broken close at hand by what you can only describe as a flake of a delicious minor melody (just one and no more). Somewhat astonished at seeing nothing, at length, after considerable search, you discover a motionless, solemn-looking little bird on a bough near by. He is apparently quite fearless, and eyes you silently and inquiringly with full dark eye. He has his back just perceptibly hunched up in a comical way, as if he were a bit round-shouldered, and has in general a bob-tailed appearance. The eyes have sometimes a funny look of misery, as if to match his minor tones.* Pretty soon this motionless birdling, with brick-red breast and white belly, drops another tinkling minor note or two, or more probably three or four. It seems as if in the midst of his pensive revery a strain of soliloquy now and then bursts from his burdened breast,—as some Porpora or Chopin might now and then absent-mindedly touch, ever so capriciously, the ivory keys of a piano, evoking three or four chords of faltering music to accompany and interpret his thought.

The redbreast is extremely neat and pretty in

*It almost seems like caricaturing the bird to put these things into words; yet traces of them are certainly there, and I can not erase what I have written. It is known that the English artists have all failed to catch the peculiar expressions of the robin's look. Only the ambrotype or daguerreotype would seem delicate enough to register them.

plumage. The frontlet of the females is lighter than that of the males, being of a pale terra-cotta tint. The birds hop about with as light and springy a motion as if they were of inflated india-rubber and rebounded every time they touched ground. They like the society of man, and thousands are semi-domesticated, never migrating even to the south of the island. Thomson's pretty description of the robin hopping over the floor in winter, and eyeing the smiling family askance; and Shakespeare's fancy of the bird coming in winter when flowers are none, to winter-ground with leaves the corse of Cymbeline; not to speak of Herrick's poems, or of the old ballads about the marriage of Cock Robin and Jenny Wren, or the story of the Babes in the Wood covered by the robins with leaves,—have made the ruddock best known in stranger-lands of all the English birds. Probably it is due to the superstition that it would be unlucky to hurt a redbreast or rob its nest that there are so many of them in the land. By ties of kin and in the scientific classifications they are the counterpart of our bluebirds, and have similar plaintive-cheery tones. If we could have bluebirds singing in our grounds all the year round as the English do their robins! The bird seems to like to get near you when you are outdoors, and for reasons known only to himself is always quietly watching you in a mysterious way, his bright eye betraying not a shade of emotion. To tell the truth, you are tempted to regard him as just a little uncanny. With the rustics this is doubtless

helped on by his strong liking for the inside of the churches, where, in all probability, he is only seeking spiders and flies.

A trait that much endears cock robin to me is his habit of singing all through the dreariest rainy days. (The English blackbird, too, likes to sing on a showery day, as does the throstle.) The robin, when singing, opens his bill remarkably wide for so small a bird. His formal song in breeding time is not of a plaintive cast, as is his ordinary talk. It begins with a little gush of melody like our warbling vireo's, is more rapidly delivered than the bluebird's carol and has, besides, a sweet whistle. It is a broken improvisation of great variety; he begins, but seems to stop disheartened; reminds one of a child learning to sing who has not yet learned an entire tune. The detached minor notes of the robin's ordinary talk have generally a slightly vibrant quality which I know not otherwise how to describe than by saying there is just a shade of jew's-harp music about them. For scolding speech he delivers himself of a perfect rattle of Lilliputian chits which seem as if they should come from a much smaller bird. Then, too, after the manner of the starling, he has a way of snapping his bill continuously, as if he were cracking bird-seed. Usually, you hear, but do not see, this little musician-priest intoning his litany in his leafy chapel. He delivers the threnody in staccato fashion, with long and abrupt pauses, as if he were meditating between whiles on life and destiny.

Another bird quite as common as the redbreast contrasts quite markedly with him in voice. I mean the Chaffinch. John Burroughs thinks, very strangely, that this bird is the most abundant in Great Britain. No one else says so. It is scarce in Derbyshire and other sections. I guess the tremendous volume of their loud song makes them seem more numerous than they are. "Gentle" is just the word for the robin's song, but does not apply to the chaffinch. The one is the tender twilight song of a lassie, the other the gay whistling of a plowboy on a sunny morning. The chaffinch is preeminently the joy-bringing bird for all Europe, and is worth more to her than all the kings she ever had, or queens either. Go where you will, you can't escape the chaffinch, and are far from wishing to do so, as a general thing. I even met with it on the high Rosenlauri Pass below the snow-covered summit of the Matterhorn, singing blithely in a grove of dark spruces. In Provence, in Italy, in Germany, I still encountered this irrepressible hearty singer. He wears a beautiful motley jacket of black, dark-blue, and chestnut, of green, wine-red, yellow, and ash-gray, and has four white splashes on his wings and two on his tail. The plainer black and white female is scarcely less jaunty in look. The chaffinch's energetic burst of song might be described to American bird-lovers who have not heard it by that of our chestnut-sided warbler. The fox-sparrow's notes, too, continually remind one of this bird. He actu-

ally has to be at the top of his condition in physical strength to be able to utter so vigorous a stave. To compare little things with great, he shakes and shudders like a locomotive starting a heavy train, and fairly makes your ears tingle,—not so much by the preliminary trill as by the flourish at the end. When given in full, this always sounded, to my fancy, like “Why, why; fye, fye, fye, Sister Wheat-ear!” (Burroughs says “Whittier” was what it seemed to him), or sometimes as if it ended with “three cheer,” or “don’t-you-see?” He utters this monotonous bugle-call about seven times a minute, by the watch, say five thousand times a day,—enough to drive most nervous Americans mad, if they had to hear them all. The chaffinch, like our Indigo bird, is a master joy-inspirer if you don’t have too much of him, but leave him where nature placed him, among the trees and in the air of heaven. On the Continent, among the racket-loving Latins, his admired voice dooms him literally to chains and a dungeon and to blindness. (Man is the only unmitigated fiend in existence.) One can scarcely bear to think of the not uncommon custom in France and Italy of blinding chaffinches by passing a white-hot iron before the lidless eye. At Locarno I saw a canary with a little platform and a perch instead of a cage; he was tied to his perch by a tiny chain. I also saw a painting by Carel Fabritius (1620-1654) in the Mauritz Huis at The Hague, which depicts a chaffinch so chained.

VII
SOME MISTAKES OF BURROUGHS

VII

SOME MISTAKES OF BURROUGHS

AS THE reader has seen, the Sage of the Hudson says he welcomes friendly criticism. He was far from thinking that he was always "sleeping side er old man Know-all." So I will venture to note in the interest of truth some of the slips in nature-fact in his writings, and I assure you I do so with more reluctance than he shows in tearing Thoreau to pieces in one of his latest volumes, or trying to. He does convict Thoreau of some inaccuracies. But it is amusing to see how often the matter-of-fact farmer-naturalist misses it in trying to understand Thoreau's subtle mysticism and his paradoxes.

To begin with, I note that on page 87 of "Birds and Poets" (Edinburgh ed.), Burroughs says the bird's eye is round. Of course the iris and eyeball are round; but the general shape of the eye is elliptical. I remember Mrs. Stratton Porter writing to me in a state of wrath, because her artist had made the eye of a bird round instead of elliptical, in her charming book "The Fire Bird."

Burroughs has criticized Emerson in his famous little poem, "The Snowstorm," affirming that the snow does not come "announced by all the trumpets

of the sky." But it does do so *sometimes*; and just such blustering blizzard storms, accompanied by heavy snowfalls, produce the effects Emerson depicts. This kind of storm comes with a tremendous rush of roaring wind, driving the snow across the landscape and beating it on the trees. Later the wind may or may not fall, but the snow goes on falling or driving.

When Emerson says,

". . . The fierce artificer
Curves his white bastions with projected roof
Round every windward stake or tree or door,"

he is evidently not describing the silent snow that simply caps with fluffy white pillows the fence-posts and kennels, but the kind that is carved and curved; and it is the wind alone that does that kind of work. Almost all snowstorms do come preceded by a lull, as Burroughs notes; but there are exceptions, which he might have admitted if he had not been so eager to put a big feather in his cap by detecting an apparent error in that close observer of nature, Ralph Waldo Emerson, that he forgot the said exceptions—if indeed he had ever observed them. Perhaps in his warm Hudson River valley our fierce New England snow-blusters do not occur.

In his controversies with William J. Long the mass of the facts are on Burroughs's side. One does not wonder that he is filled with incredulity at the story of the fox playing possum and stiffening

out as if dead. (He had hunted and seen foxes all his life.) Probably there does not exist a well-authenticated case of Reynard doing any such thing, here in America at least; and to a student of the actual creature in the fields, as Burroughs was, skepticism was inevitable. But I note that Mr. J. G. Gibson, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, under the caption "Fox," says: "There are several well-authenticated instances of the fox counterfeiting death in order to escape from its enemies." Shall we then assert that English foxes, from being hunted for ages so much more than in America, have developed keener instincts for self-preservation?

Another matter in which I think he did not succeed in convicting Mr. Long of inaccuracy (tho he is a vulnerable fellow, this nature-romancer; and Burroughs, tho having the unpopular side in the controversy, whipped him all around the lot in most matters) was the case of the porcupine. Mr. Long stated that the American porcupine, like his cousin the English hedgehog, rolls himself up in a ball. Burroughs said no. I settled the whole matter, I believe, by studies of the animal in the Maine woods. I found by personal meetings with the beasts that the grown-ups can't be forced by hook or crook into rolling up ball-shaped, but that the young or half-grown ones do so, without any stimulus of stick at all, merely as a protective device. So here was a case in which both sides were right.

Again, Mr. Burroughs, in his "Notes by the Way," expresses the opinion that the English ivy does not injure its tree by sucking the sap through its claspers. But Mr. Shirley Hibbard, author of a work on the ivy, remarks in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, that the claspers are true roots, or develop into such, and at a certain stage derive all their nourishment from the tree sap, even when the main roots of the ivy plant are cut at the ground. This confirms the truth of Shakespeare's nature note in the "Tempest" which Burroughs doubted. One does not wonder he did so, for Shakespeare's natural history is almost all very inaccurate.

Burroughs makes a blunder in his book "Fresh Fields" (p. 66), when he says, "The only thing I recall in Shakespeare that gives a faint whiff of our forest life occurs in 'All's Well That Ends Well' (act iv), where the *Clown* says, 'I am a woodland fellow, sir, that ever loved a great fire.'" This assertion of John Burroughs makes one gasp. Did he never read, "As You Like It" at all, and "Cymbeline," both of them rich in wild forest-life? "All's Well" has not a trace of wild life except that one sentence.

John Burroughs also says, in his "Fresh Fields," that the foxglove is the most conspicuous flower in England. I may not catch his meaning of the word "conspicuous"; but I think he allowed the striking showiness, the weird *diablerie*, of the flower to in-

fluence his judgment. I studied English flowers in 1898 in all his localities, all through the season, in north, south, and middle England, and found the foxglove to be rather rare. It is not to be seen at all on the plains, especially in the wide eastern shires. In the Lake district and in Derbyshire it is quite common. But the beaked white parsley, which I found whitening Europe from Paestum to Loch Katrine in April and May, or the charlock (mustard), or the yellow bloom of the broom or of the gorse, seemed to me, any one of them, to be more conspicuous by far than the foxglove, more insistent to the eye, in mass-bloom at any rate.

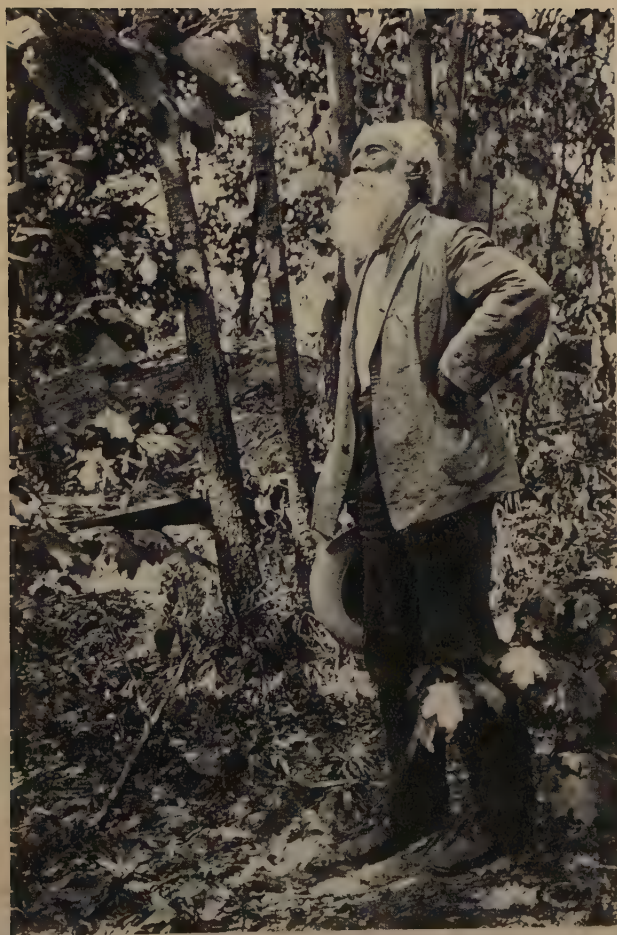
The Naturalist of the Hudson affirms in his "Nature and the Poets" chapter of "Pepacton" (pp. 111, 112 and elsewhere) that all the bluebird's notes are call notes, that he is not a songster. With deference I must dispute this. On my place, where bluebirds have nested for years, I have stood and listened to the steady song of the bluebird, kept up for five minutes at a time *con brio*,—his gentle "cheer-ke-cheery, keer keery," etc, repeated over and over again. This is a true song, and no mere call.

Burroughs says that the American Robins are not walkers, that they only hop. They do, however, often run, in the manner of a walk; that is, by putting one foot before the other, only it takes a lightning-quick glance to see it, the feet twinkling so

fast that the separate motions are almost invisible. (I have watched them a hundred times.) Burroughs does not mention this running of the bird. Really, his motto seemed to be, "When I ope my mouth let no dog bark." He lacked the accuracy and tolerance that come from scientific college training. This is especially noticeable in his wrangle over his contention that animals have not a trace of reasoning power. Mr. Reginald Heber Howe, a more accurate observer of the birds than he, says rightly that all the thrushes walk and run, as well as hop. In a letter in the *Boston Transcript*, dated June 15, 1895, he says:

"In watching robins carefully when on the ground I think they will be found to move in this way. Standing erect, they make one, rarely two, decided hops, and then lowering the head run or walk (better run) a number of distinct steps. In longer grass the hops are perhaps more apparent and the steps fewer in number. A great deal I think depends upon the surface of the ground. On smooth private lawns, for instance, they often run very rapidly a distance of from four to six feet. Very young birds, I think, almost always hop.

"I quote the following from Minot's 'Land and Game Birds of New England' in regard to the robin, and which Mr. William Brewster has let stand in the revised edition: 'One may often see robins gathered on a lawn, particularly after hard showers, eagerly engaged in unearthing their prey, now running along so quickly that it is almost impossible to detect the motion of their feet (which, in fact, is not hopping, but walking).'"



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JOHN BURROUGHS IN HIS WOODLAND GARDEN



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JOHN BURROUGHS IN HIS STUDY

In the Adirondack chapter of his first book, "Wake Robin," J. B. sets down a bit of half-knowledge which later in his studies he would himself have amended: he remarks that the song of the white-throated sparrow (the peabody bird) "ends when it seems only to have begun. If the bird could give us the finishing strain, of which this seems only the prelude, it would stand first among feathered songsters." Now, the bird does give the finishing strain most deliciously, in the breeding season, in the copses and woods of Maine and New Hampshire. But in Washington and along the Hudson and in Massachusetts, where Burroughs heard it, and where it is a migrant, I have never heard more than the half-strain of which he speaks. As a companion of the hermit-thrush up North, its full evening song is unrivaled for purity, and not excelled in beauty by that of the hermit-thrush itself, and almost rivals the prima-donna notes of the winter wren.

In a postal card to me Burroughs made the mistake of maintaining that the warbling vireo of the elm-tree tops (called by Wilson Flagg, in his "Birds and Seasons of New England," p. 43, the "brigadier-bird," and by him alone so termed) is that prying, quaint, waggish birdling of the portentous voice, that haunter of the copses—the white-eyed vireo. That bird is a good mimic. I have heard him imitate the catbird's mew. The white-eyed's scolding "chut" and "tip-where, tip-er-whee," and the like,

are very marked; but he does not frequent elm-tree tops, nor does his song or talk end in any kind of an emphatic "brigade" or "teet."

Our poet-naturalist, if he had happened to live, as I do, in the vicinity of marketmen's greenhouses, would never have made the statement he did (*Century Magazine*, June, 1903), in his polemical eagerness to show that birds do not reason; namely, that while a bird will sometimes dash against a window-pane again and again, fighting in its own image an imaginary enemy, "ants or bees would not have thought of doing it." On the contrary, a near neighbor of mine makes quite a bit of money (as an avocation) by selling small stocks of bees to the greenhouse men, just because the bees (put into the glass houses to cross-fertilize the cucumber blossoms) dash themselves to death so fast against the glass. This amateur apiarian tells me that, if it were not for the inveterate habit of the bees of thus committing suicide, the sale of his bees would never pay him. And the greenhouse men tell me they sweep the bees up by thousands if they make the mistake of first introducing them into the glass house on any day but a rainy one.

Speaking of bees, Burroughs, in his posthumous volume, "Under the Maples," reveals his usual tendency crudely to ride a theory too hard. He dogmatically and dictatorily brushes aside every interpreter of the bees (Maeterlinck, *e.g.*) except himself, and explains the communication of ideas from

bee to bee, and to the whole hive, by a mysterious telepathic Spirit of the Hive, something like the old discarded "principle of vitality," which Huxley sarcastically likened to the "horology of the clock." I was, so to speak, brought up in the apiary of my revered friend, Mr. Langstroth, "Father of Bee-keeping in America," and inventor of the movable-comb hive as used in this country, and I, in common with all other bee-students, have always taken it to be an axiom that the highly developed sense of smell in bees was one of their chief means of communication. A bee smeared with nectar enters the hive, and is followed out by others, to his new find. That is all. A "Spirit of the Hive," or telepathy, need not be invoked at all. As for Burroughs's suggestion that telepathy in man is a survival of this spirit, rather than the latest flowering of the mind in exceptionally sensitive brains, he seems to me to be crassly wrong.

Burroughs affirms, in his chapter "A Hunt for the Nightingale," in "Fresh Fields," that there is in England "no cloud-scenery as with us, no mass and solidity, no height nor depth." This remark really fills one with amazement. I have noted time and again in Derbyshire and in Scotland as magnificent and massive cumulus clouds—those "traveling mountains of the sky"—as any in the Mississippi Valley, where I think our grandest cloud-effects are to be seen, at least east of the Mississippi river. I took notes of a sunset-sky near Edinburgh,

in 1898, which accurately corresponded to the famous description of a sunset in Scott's "Antiquary,"—the "somber magnificence of the massive congregation of vapors," "forming out of their unsubstantial gloom the show of pyramids and towers," etc. I have vividly in memory many another sunset, too, in Derbyshire, and midday skies there, filled with colossal cloud-structures toppling round in gorgeous splendor of light and shade such as I never saw equaled in America, or in Italy, or in Switzerland. It is the perpetual moisture that is the cause. Only you must get out of the black country, the soot-cursed manufacturing centers, to see these things. Perhaps our John o'Birds happened upon some exceptionally gray season or gray-skied localities. Yet he contradicts himself, and on another page of "Fresh Fields" speaks of seeing near Stratford a "sky full of white, soft, high-piled thunder-heads" (chap. i, "Nature in England"). Gainsborough and Tennyson give you the right idea of English skies as I saw them through two long summers' study of them.

John Burroughs's ignorance of art, and his bucolic scorn of it, betrayed him into a ludicrous schoolboy error about the laws of perspective. We may call to the witness-stand at this point my friend, Prof. Leslie W. Miller, emeritus president of the Pennsylvania School of Industrial Art and author of a text-book on perspective. He speaks as follows:—

"In the July *Atlantic* for 1920, page 161, Burroughs (after disposing of the objections that had been raised to his criticism of Thoreau for the assertion that he had very nearly stumbled over the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow) pursuing lines of reflection that the elusive rainbow had suggested, makes an admission which it must be owned is not a little surprising from so keen an observer. 'What the explanation is [he says, speaking of the sun drawing water] of those spokes of light proceeding from those openings in the clouds, as if the sun were just behind them, when it is so far away that its rays to human eyes would seem parallel with one another, I do not know.' What a privilege to play the schoolmaster to so advanced a pupil as John Burroughs! The explanation is perfectly simple: the sun's rays *are* parallel, and the apparent radiation is nothing but the perfectly familiar convergence of parallel lines in perspective. We become so accustomed to this convergence on a small scale,—as in the lines of buildings, and in vistas along streets, railroads, *et cetera*, that it excites no comment and raises no questions, but on the gigantic scale which it assumes in connection with celestial phenomena it takes on the proportions of a puzzle. So far as all practical human purposes are concerned, the sun is at an infinite distance, and is itself the vanishing-point of the practically parallel rays within the ken of any particular observer. This vanishing-point is always opposite the eye of the observer, of course, just as the center of the rainbow is, and when he moves, it moves too. This particular effect is not the only one of the kind from which the interesting lesson can be learned that the facts of appearance are quite as well worth a little study as those of the more substantial realities, nor is Mr. Burroughs the first trained observer to miss the true explanation of phenomena by seeking for physical interpretations of purely optical effects."

Now, I in my turn must play the schoolmaster a

little. This matter of correcting the slips of others is a merry game of tag. I feel quite sure that I can be tagged in this very book by some one, some specialist. In the evening of the very day when Mr. Miller handed over to me the above true explanation of the apparent divergence of the sun's rays, I called attention (as a company of us in Martha's Vineyard were alighting from his car to enter a friend's house for an evening's entertainment in music) to the Great Dipper, then, at the end of August, riding rather low in the north, and, quoting the carrier's words in Shakespeare—"Charles' Wain is over the new chimney" (I Hen. IV, ii, 1-2)—I remarked that I used the constellation's apparent movement in the northern heavens as a night-clock, or as Thoreau might have jiggged it,—

"The golden pointers of my clock move high
On the blue-black dial of the northern sky."

Then, with an irritating sarcastic air of superior wisdom and solemn-bearded gravity that passed for a settler with the younger members of the group, one of us, whom I will call Mr. L., asserted that I was mistaken: the Dipper, or Wain, like the pole-star to which it points, does not, said he, change its position in the sky at all in any one night, to the eye of an observer on the earth, but only changes its apparent position with the season,—that is, with the elevation of the polar star as the sun in winter sinks lower and we of the northern latitudes swing northward under higher stars while we fly our great

annual zodiacal flight. The explanation of the man's ignorance in the matter I felt to be that he had evidently never made observations of the comparative heights of Charles's Wain at different hours of the night. It is of course a truism that the constellation makes an apparent revolution about the polar star once in every twenty-four hours, as in the case of all of the never-setting, spiraling circumpolar stars. The next night I watched the northern sky as the globe turned eastward, saw how we brought up a great blood-red moon in the east, and how Charles's Wain was gradually moved forward and upward and eastward more and more as the night passed. Then I wondered and laughed softly to myself and sat down to my writing-table and tagged Mr. L. May he forgive me!

VIII

THE BATTLE OF THE NATURALISTS

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"Nature and her creations are always offering strange surprises. As soon as we are sure of something that never, never happens, lo! it comes off under our very nose in the most commonplace, matter-of-fact way."

—John C. Van Dyke.*

THE introduction of the porcupine question above seems to invite further details of the "Battle of the Naturalists," in 1903 and later, the leaders in which were Burroughs, Thompson Seton, and William J. Long.

Burroughs opened the war with his article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, March, 1903, called "Real and Sham Natural History," in which he smoked out some fakers. This article was so sassy and slashing in its personalities, that, contrary to his custom, he did not reprint it in book form, except in fragments, and with no names mentioned. Besides, his antagonists, with all the *ban* and *arrière-ban* of their forces, showed up his own shortcomings and limitations too well. In his later book-articles on the mind of animals—he took refuge in more dignified and better digested statements. He hadn't then such a

*Burroughs himself tells what seems almost incredible at first—that he once heard a robin that had the full song of the brown thrasher. He would not believe it till he saw the bird singing ("Talks," p. 242).

big bee in his bonnet. But his utterances were true medicine, the right corrective for the nature-faker stuff then especially pouring from the press. The cheap daily press, it is true, still continues to lay these yarns before the public; tho, as they are intended only for children, no one is misled by them. Even the children know they are only romances.

After prudently citing a list of genuine and praiseworthy writers on outdoor life,—Bradford Torrey, Dallas Lore Sharp, Charles G. D. Roberts, Davenport Hulbert,—he singles out with his lasso and attempts to flay Thompson Seton and William J. Long, devoting the bulk of his paper to them and their sins against veracity.

He objects to Mr. Seton's statement about a fox, pursued by dogs, darting through a flock of sheep and backing one of them for a ride of several hundred yards to throw the dogs off the scent. To me this does not seem at all incredible after seeing, what is a common sight in England, starlings riding on the backs of grateful sheep to pick the ticks from them. But when Seton makes the fox lure the hounds upon a long trestle bridge, where he knows they will be just in time to be run over and killed by a coming train, he passes from the credible to the incredible. The fox may have done the things he says, but not with the purpose-aforethought he attributes to it. "Right dar's whar he broke his merlasses jug." Burroughs sarcastically remarks that doubtless the fox had a watch and time-table about his person. Mr. Long, taking the war-path

for Seton in the *North American* (April, 1903), authenticates the fox story by telling how he himself experienced the same thing in Boothbay, Maine, in 1887:

"I was following a fox one day, when I saw some sheep scatter suddenly. Knowing that the fox was there, I ran down, calling on the hound. There was soft snow on the ground, and every path in the field was plain as a footpath. A fox trail came down to where the sheep were standing and ended there; nor was there any further track that my own eyes or the hound's nose could discover. On the other side of the field I found the fox track again beside that of a frightened sheep. It began there with no back track, and it was as certain as if seen and photographed that the fox had crossed on the sheep's back. No other way, except to fly or to jump a hundred yards, was possible."

"In all the animal stories of Mr. Thompson Seton that I have read," says Burroughs, "liberties are taken with the facts. In his study of the rabbit Raggylug, he says: 'Those who do not know the animals well may think I have humanized them, but those who have lived so near them as to know something of their ways and their minds will not think so.' This is the old trick of the romancer. He swears his tale is true because he knows his reader wants this assurance; it makes the thing taste better."

Seton depicts the doings of a leader among the crows that he names Silver Spot, a crow that apparently can count thirty. But Burroughs says the crows have no leaders, altho they do post sentinels.

I have always doubted that posting. The birds have a gregarious social instinct, and one of them usually keeps watch and warns the others. I will add that an honest farmer's boy I know down in Maine tells me the crows there can't count three. For when three men with guns enter a wood where crows are, and the crows leave, if then two of the men leave and one of them remains behind, the crows think all have gone, and re-enter the wood only to be shot by the man still there.

All through his stubborn fight against the educative theory regarding the animals—against the theory that the old birds, for example, teach the young ones how to fly, sing, and get their food—Burroughs seems to me to have been singularly unwilling to admit the well-known facts that the young of animals at least imitate their parents; that inherited instinct is not all. Any observer can see and hear this. Mr. Long very pertinently asks if, as Burroughs asserted, "all animals do exactly and instinctively what their parents did," how happens it that the gentle sheep-herding collie has been evolved from his sheep-eating ancestors?

The fact is, Uncle John was outshone by these brilliant young writers, and undertook to discipline them in the rather crabbed and unfair way he treated all his rivals. How would his plain-song cuckoo tales thrive if these brilliant Münchausen romances were admitted to be true? They *were* romance in part, and Burroughs performed a valuable service to truth and to literature in showing

them up. It was a disagreeable task, performed with spirit and energy, tho not without a natural show of temper and irritability. But he himself revealed his own limitations badly the while. As Mr. Long says, "He weighs the universe with the scales of his own farm and barnyard." He would have us believe that Mr. Long is only an arm-chair naturalist, knowing little or nothing of the woods and fields at first hand. But his opponent beats him from his ward by showing that for twenty years he had been a laborious and patient student of animals in the wild woods (*North American Review*, April, 1903). For twenty years he had gone alone, he says, into the northern woods, and also tramped and camped with scores of old trappers and hunters and Indians and taken notes of their talk. He found them on the whole truthful, through self-interest, if nothing else.

Mr. Long says that he and his guides and the trappers discovered in animals individuality to a degree that others had not noted. Any one who watches animals, he says, will find originality in them, simply because it is a fact that all forms of organic life tend to vary, not only in their bodies, but in their minds and acts.

It is evident to one weighing the pros and cons in the debate that, while Seton and Long are good and laborious naturalists, and have investigated in the field of wild animal life more deeply than Burroughs (especially the wild vertebrates), each has an unfortunate tendency to flaw his printed work with fiction,—just as psychic mediums, like Eusapia

Palladino, often add a little touch of deceit to make the mystery greater, or when psychic œstrus flags.

Mr. Long, especially, is incurably romantic, even when he is trying to be truthful and is on the witness-stand. (We all know this type.) For example, take his well-known yarns about the oriole's nest, and of the woodcock's surgery of its own broken leg by means of splints. That a pair of orioles put together on the ground, out of three sticks, a neat triangle of a staging, tying it elaborately together, knotting the ends of the strings to keep them from raveling, and then tied a string to the middle of the contraption, and, holding this string in their bills, flew up into a tree and located it there as a framework from which to suspend their nests, this reverend gentleman solemnly deposes that he saw done, but admits that it occurred when he was a small boy! Plenty of time, you perceive, for lapse of memory, or for imagination and dream to become indistinguishable from reality.

"After such a proceeding," laughingly remarks Oom John, "how long will it be before the water-birds are building little rush cradles for their young, or rush boats to be driven about the ponds and lakes by means of leaf sails, or before Jenny Wren will be living in a log cabin of her own construction? How long will it be before some one makes affidavit that the sparrow with his bow and arrow has been seen to kill Cock Robin, and the beetle with thread and needle engaged in making the shroud?"

It won't do, of course, to say that a thing is impossible because you or I have never seen it. John

Burroughs expressly states that this is never the ground of his objection to the nature-faker's stories, but only their impossibility because not in line with the nature of the animals and the nature of things. For instance, he would not, I am sure, deny the possibility of something I witnessed from the veranda of my home, here within sight of the Gilded Dome of Boston,—namely, an osprey carrying a goldfish in its talons, the fish parallel with the bird's body, like the painted car of an airship. I happen to know where he got that fish, for more than one pond in my neighborhood has been for at least fifty years stocked with goldfish; and twenty-five years ago I knew an Elisha Dugan of an Irishman who told me he got his living by catching these, and by gathering water-lilies in the same pond.

At Rock Creek Park, in Washington, my sister and I were amused and a little astonished once to see a heron deliberately, two or three times, pick up too hard pieces of bread, walk to the water, and give them a good soaking to soften before swallowing them. But ducks and swans do the same.

Burroughs laughs to scorn Mr. Long's opinion that if it were not for the fish-hawk's instruction of her young they would probably revert to "the old hawk habit of hunting in the woods." His antagonist counters by instancing a case within his own observation of a young fish-hawk tamed by a boy that did actually so revert, and never struck at anything but land animals for food.

The Seer of the Hudson also derides the clerical

naturalist for saying that a partridge he knew, in gathering up her brood of twelve, missed one, and so kept on calling them. The idea, said Uncle John, of a partridge being able to count eleven! No, she need not count them by one, two, three enumeration, answers his opponent; she knows one is not there by missing its familiar face; something is lacking in the picture of her assembled young before her on the ground. This looks reasonable and true, but is probably exaggerated.

John also criticizes the author of the "Ways of Wood Folk" for his statement that crows assemble in the early summer, rather than in September or October as with him. But the answer given him is that while crows in the neighborhood of the Burroughs barnyard may not so flock, at least they do so at Chatham, N. B., and in the Island of Nantucket. Mr. Long depones that Charles G. D. Roberts tells him the same is true of the crows in his locality. I may supplement these witnesses by saying that the crows of New Brunswick that come down to us here in Massachusetts in winter are tamer and so, of course, of different habits from those of our Southern and inland States.

Burroughs is undoubtedly justified in thinking that Long draws the long bow when he tells how some old kingfishers went fishing down stream and returned with small minnows which they placed in a shallow pool near the main stream, and then went off and fetched their young to the spot and instructed them in diving for these shiners. "If he

had said that he saw the parent birds fishing with hook and line, or dragging a net of their own knitting, his statement would have been just as credible" (Burroughs).

For a climax to these absurdities of "sham natural history," Burroughs closes with a laugh at the imaginative Long's account of how an old fox sometimes captures chickens roosting beyond his reach in a tree. It seems the fox simply runs around the tree, going faster and faster, "jumping and clacking his teeth," and the chickens, in trying to follow him with their eyes, get dizzy and tumble off the roost. This reminds Uncle John of the owl in South Africa "which the natives believe can be made to twist its head off by a person walking round and round it. The curious bird follows you with his eyes, till, presto! his head is off."

Poor Mr. Long, after being so savagely pumelled by Burroughs, may be pardoned if he gets in a smart blow on Johnny's pate by recalling how neatly my old friend Thomas Wentworth Higginson rapped him in the Contributors' Club of the *Atlantic Monthly* (March, 1880) for the indolent sciolism of his strictures on certain New England poets for their alleged faulty wild-flower lore. Mr. Higginson simply leaves John with a foot of nose, as the Italians say, and feeling, presumably, quite silly as he sees his smart and facile criticisms demolished by Higginson's deadly diary dates of the blooming of the violets and azaleas, the clover and

the buttercups. No wonder Burroughs jumped behind the door at Scudder's to avoid meeting the Colonel there! I notice that in his "Signs and Seasons" volume—one of his maturest and best—he modifies the cocksureness of his criticisms of Bryant and Lowell in the matter of the dates of the yellow violets and the buttercups and dandelions. He had by that time learned that plants are individual, and do in one locality or season what they will not do in another.

To sum up the war of the naturalists, we may say that Burroughs won his case before the jury of the public, except, mayhap, with most children, very naturally, who will continue to prefer Seton's and Long's attractive illustrated stories just for the element in them that is least trustworthy. In my home public library I see that their books are read by the children vastly more than Burroughs's, which seem to be a little too mature and philosophical for young folks, except in the special selections quarried out of them for their benefit by his publishers. Many clouds have sailed over our heads since 1903, and even the echoes of the Battle of the Naturalists are no longer rolling among the hills. Hamlin Garland, in his excellent paper on the John Burroughs of Woodchuck Lodge (*Century*, September, 1921), draws a pretty picture of the venerable thinker and nature-student seated in a company in New York City, and fraternizing with Thompson Seton in a very chummy way, smoothing over things as one must in such social meetings. But his first state-

ment in the *Atlantic* bears the ineffaceable stamp of indignant sincerity and must stand as his underlying opinion. I suppose there is no impropriety in quoting a paragraph from a letter of Mr. Seton to me in which he says:

"John Burroughs wrote an unpleasant article about me in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1901 [1903], but I never replied to it in any way [he couldn't, very well], and Burroughs later apologized to me completely and withdrew the article so far as I was concerned. [I doubt this. B. never apologized.] Burroughs and I have always been very good friends. He visited in my house, and I in his, after the incident."

These naturalists remind one of Congressmen and Members of Parliament, as well as of lawyers, all of whom are mortal enemies in the legislative hall or courtroom; but, on meeting in the restaurant or barroom or social circle afterward, are "soshubble es a basket er kittens," and as "familious wid wunner nudder" as ever.

IX
SOME LATER WRITINGS

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NOTWITHSTANDING that moral and philosophical studies took up a good deal of his leisure in his later years, Burroughs never ceased his interrogation of nature. To the end he remained a boy in his curiosity about the ways of the wild things of field and forest. The Alaska trip he describes in "Far and Near," and the Jamaica jaunt in the same volume. What he and his party saw in the western wonderland of the United States is related in the little book "Camping and Tramping with Roosevelt" (1907),—of all of which more later.

The Naturalist of the Hudson can scarcely be called a brilliant success as a student of the tropics. He terms Jamaica "a land cursed with perpetual summer." In Jamaica his lack of affinity and equipment for tropical study is quite apparent. To the splendid imagination and laboratory skill of William Beebe his mind in this particular field compares as that of a country schoolboy afflicted with nostalgia for his farm,—like Cuddie, in "Old Mortality," who lamented that he was going to a far country when he took service ten miles away from his native Tilletudlem. Thoreau, I fear, would have made a rather better showing in the tropics than our spoiled

popular favorite. Not being such a one at all, Thoreau would have been more on his mettle to make a good appearance in science.

Well, that is just a little too severe on Burroughs. My friends will recognize it as a characteristic exaggeration, due to a too lively imagination. But the sober truth is that Burroughs never was entirely happy when away from his native Catskills, except perhaps in England. The tropics are a hornets' nest, and must be handled with the rubber gloves and bee-bonnet of science. John whirled in and had a little fun in his jaunt through Jamaica, used those marvelous eyes of his to some purpose in rather superficial roadside observations, as well as for making many notes on the island industries. The subtle poetry and magic that William Beebe extracts from the jungle is, however, clearly a sealed book to him. He found the picturesque negroes of Jamaica a more interesting study than a naturalist's proper work. The island has no quadrupeds to speak of, except that imported nuisance the mongoose. He heard only one native bird the song of which interested him, namely the thrush-like solitaire. He calls his month (or three weeks) in Jamaica "A Lost February" (in the volume "Far and Near," where his narrative appears). You would have expected the title to be "A New and Splendid February Found." But he rather seems to be thinking, "Never again. Home and the temperate zone are good enough for me." His favorite poet, Wordsworth, made one brief bewildered and melancholy trip to the fringe

of the European Continent, and then returned in haste to his native hills. As William could not speak the languages of Europe, so John apparently had not the key to the tropics, which is scientific enthusiasm. But why was he not free to treat nature there just as he wished? It is an old story that we persist in labeling a public man, and are piqued when he fails to justify our label. A very foolish and unfair attitude on our part. But it is great when one can be a two-sworded man, like Beebe.

Yet do not suppose that Burroughs's account of Jamaica is not as fascinating as all his other writings. It is full of interest and of valuable information, a good general guide to the island, with accounts of the United Fruit Company's plantations and equipment,—the fruit trade being about the only industry on the island that amounts to anything. A good deal of the work of the country is done by imported weak-sinewed East India coolies, and by women and girls. His first experience on the island was being taken very seriously for Santa Claus by a little girl. (This confirms the whimsical and half in earnest remark of a friend of mine, that that big white beard of his was responsible for half his popularity!) He and his two companions, his son and Mr. Kellogg—took a five-day eighty-mile trip by animal power into the interior. In this way they were always close to the familiar life of the people. A little colored boy, for example, claimed and received comradeship with the kindly venerable man.

The jungle is cut through by superb British highways, as smooth as a floor; the tangle of vegetation walling in each side is only to be penetrated by the aid of the universally used machete, a kind of massive cutlas, or corn-cutter.

Hospitality, sugar-cane, pickaninnies, oranges, coffee plantations, black caryatid women everywhere; the Southern Cross in sight, the Big Dipper almost out of sight; fanged cacti and fleas; ticks, alligators, and mosquitoes,—such were the daily and nightly experiences and phenomena.

Upon the mountains the nights were quite cold, requiring double blankets on the bed. The cocoanut trees, tree ferns, and the coarse broad-leaved grass were not a satisfactory equivalent for our lush, tender, northern lawn-grasses. In fact, he says that "Nature in the tropics has little tenderness or winsomeness. She is barbaric; she is painty and stiff; she has no sentiment; she does not touch the heart . . . she is rank, she is wicked; she stings and stabs and bites you, or she heeds you not."

He did not form a high opinion of the song of the West Indian species of mocking-bird. "It was bantering, hilarious, festive; but it had no sweetness, seriousness, or feeling."

The nightingales of Kingston consisted of crowing barnyard cocks, singing hourly all night with tolerable regularity, one waking up another all over the city. The party were especially taken with the deep-blue vistas, and the seascapes seen from the mountain summits.

Burroughs, on the way to California, in 1909, was immensely interested in the new geology he met with on every hand,—the erosion of the rocks, the channeled cañons, petrified forests, and the fantastic pinnacles and domes and buttes of Colorado and Arizona. All this was new in a double sense, for these vast landscapes had been the work of much later geological time and forces than the older rock-formations of the Eastern States. In the trip to see a petrified forest they rode out from Adamana, Arizona, nine miles to the North Sigillaria forest of petrified trees discovered in 1907 by John Muir.

He was (need one say?) profoundly moved by the unearthly grandeur of that "Divine Abyss," the Grand Cañon of the Colorado, altho he did not have the experience of some people, who literally fall to the earth, weeping (at least one woman did) silently and long at their first sight of the stupendous spectacle. It moves the soul like the music of the *Götterdämmerung* of Wagner. It is a vision rather than a spectacle. The purple depths and aerial perspectives of the mighty gulf overwhelm the mind. Think of a chasm a mile deep, from ten to twenty miles wide, in which the Pyramids would appear only as far-down tents; a vast series of many-colored domes, pinnacles, turrets, and temples gleaming in the sun. Burroughs's elaborate description of the geology of the Grand Cañon is by far the best popular account I have seen. He describes the giant staircase that leads down from Utah to the Cañon, through the Cretaceous, the

white sandstone Jurassic, the vermilion Triassic, the steps of which are thousands of feet high and fifty or more miles broad, until at last the Carboniferous formations are reached out of which the Cañon itself has been carved by the water and sand of the Colorado River, and by the erosion of the chemic forces of the air and by changes of temperature. His party descended four thousand feet into the Cañon,—to within one thousand feet of the bottom.

In the end of April, 1909, he found himself at the Yosemite. "When you cross the threshold," he writes, "you at once feel the spell of the brooding calm and sheltered seclusion that pervades it." The ordered, the tranquil, the restful were what pleased him; and they seemed enhanced by the power and grandeur that encompassed them. The peace of the valley's fields, the seclusion of the woods, the privacy of sunny glades, "the enchantment of falls and lucid waters, with a touch of human occupancy here and there,"—all this, set in that enormous granite frame, is what wins one's heart. It is nature in her tender and "almost domestic moods" that pleases him in the Yosemite. (But when and where did any other kind of nature deeply please him?)

He says of El Capitan: "It is as clean and smooth as the flank of a horse, and as poised and calm as a Greek statue. It curves out toward the base as if planted there to resist the pressure of worlds"—

“probably the most majestic single granite column or mountain buttress on the earth.”

Here in the Yosemite they tented in Camp Ah-wahnee, sitting late about its huge camp-fire.

Mr. Burroughs thoroughly enjoyed himself during his trip to Hawaii in 1909. There seemed to be absolutely nothing to mar his happiness. The soft balmy May air was perfection, the people highly hospitable, and nature and the works of man novel and therefore interesting. The fruits delicious, sunshine almost unbroken, the landscape “perfumed now and then by a sprinkle of sunlit rain from the mountains.” There was always in sight the wonderful blue sea; American civic life perfectly ordered, clean streets, good service everywhere; in short, happiness in the air, and in the heart of everybody.

There is good society in abundance in Honolulu; for example, you may see there many of our Eastern college women—Bryn Mawr, Wellesley, Vassar teachers, and others.

The clammers up the wet chilly mountains were not particularly enjoyed by our naturalist. He did not fancy the slippery, muddy paths, choked with tropical growth. But he did extremely enjoy the memorable and fascinating inter-island excursion to see the volcanoes of Haleakala and Kilauea under the escort of a polite and attentive host, the planter, Mr. Aiken.

He was of course on the lookout for birds, but was only interested in them in proportion to their resemblance to our American birds. He liked the Oahu thrush because it resembled our brown thrasher, tho having a richer and finer song. Was delighted to find that the English skylark had been introduced into the islands, and saw and heard it everywhere. Saw also the "English," or Mongolian, pheasant. He traversed a tree-fern forest, went through a huge sugar-making establishment and looked down into Kilauea's red pit of fire.

A teacher in one of the schools in Honolulu during his stay was telling her pupils about Burroughs, the great man they had among them. "And here he is right here in Honolulu, the guest of our city." "Yes, I know," said one of the boys. "I saw him yesterday. He was in our yard stealing mangoes."

Of the trip of Mr. and Mrs. John Burroughs to Bermuda he has apparently left in printed record but one or two facts. He says they found neither pleasure nor health there. It would seem that they must have found a specimen of the vile spirit of extortion and greed that stamps the bonifaces of certain tourist inns of the Isle of Wight and Southern England. Bermuda has a black eye in that respect now. But Burroughs gives us a hint of one little bit of pleasure he had in Bermuda: he says he enjoyed the birds. "The bobolinks, and the catbirds, and the cardinals seemed," he says, "to

make American territory of it. Our birds had annexed the islands despite the Britishers."

Burroughs's interesting little brochure, "Camping and Tramping With Roosevelt," stands apart from his other work as his one essay in journalistic reporting; for that is how it strikes one. He appears in it as one studying a kind of magnificent natural-history specimen, a new kind of animal! He was evidently swept off his feet by the fascination which this splendid and faulty boy-man, this kind of scholarly Buffalo Bill, exerted over him and over all whom he met. And yet not so much so as to cause Burroughs to forget to watch and chronicle his enthusiasms and the tremendous energy of his actions, on horseback or afoot, out there in the vast scenery of the Rockies. This Roosevelt book came out just before the last volume was appearing of the fifteen-volume edition of Burroughs's complete works (1908). I suppose it will be included in a future complete edition, tho I know nothing about the directions he left regarding it. It would be a great pity to omit it. A man is almost always better worth studying than a bird or an insect.

This trip to the Yellowstone Park Burroughs describes in his usual pleasing style. The party traveled on horseback, by sleigh, on skis, etc. John got run away with in an ambulance they had provided for him, rather to his mortification; but owing to a front curtain in the wagon, did not know he was being run away with till it was all over. He

had held on to the sides of the wagon in astonishment as it went "a-bilin'" over the road. He had not been on horseback for fifty years, and in fact had only ridden a few times in that manner in his life. Yet he went through all successfully. The most interesting animal they saw was the President,—a boy in everything, of inexhaustible vitality and energy, a walk of eighteen or twenty miles meaning nothing to him but pleasure. He shouted with laughter at anything laughable, and out-tired everybody. As for birds, he knew at least as much as Burroughs, and often more.

In his volume "Time and Change," written at seventy-five, Burroughs tells us what his life in the open did for him:

"My excursions to nature helped to clothe me with health, if not with humility; they have helped sharpen and attune all my senses; they have kept my eyes in such good trim that they have not failed me for one moment during all the seventy-five years I have had them; they have made my sense of smell so keen that I have much pleasure in the wild open-air perfumes, especially in the spring—the delicate breath of the blooming elms and maples and willows, the breath of the woods, of the pastures, of the shore. This keen healthy sense of smell has made me abhor tobacco and flee from close rooms, and put the stench of cities behind me. . . . When I have dwelt in cities, the country was always near by, and I used to get a bite of country soil at least once a week to keep my system normal."

Burroughs's many excursions and trips far and near served him in place of city life. The lack of



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JOHN BURROUGHS

Photo taken on Yale Campus, on the occasion of his
receiving the degree of Doctor of Letters, 1910



PHOTO FROM WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

JOHN BURROUGHS ON THE STEPS OF THE MUSEUM OF ART, TOLEDO, OHIO
On the occasion of the unveiling of a marble statue of him. 20,000 children filed by in procession
and laid flowers at his feet

intellectual companionship in his home and in his rural environment compelled him to go on frequent forays, or raids. His ever-active brain would else have atrophied. Neither his wife nor his brothers ever read his books (he told me this himself) or knew anything about his literary life at all. In the volume "Far and Near" he shows the same sharp powers of observation as in his earlier books. So, in "Leaf and Tendril." One is astonished at the fulness of mind and the great output, not merely of outdoor reporting, but of closely reasoned popular scientific work, during the last lustrums of the life of this self-educated man, who professed to be no scholar. He was at any rate a smart scholar in Dame Nature's school.

In 1910, he received the degree of Doctor of Letters (Litt.D.) from Yale. The illustrated papers showed him walking in the campus wearing the cap and gown of a doctor. This honor may possibly have come to him through his and my old friend, Prof. Henry A. Beers, of Yale. This author, and life-long popular instructor in English literature at the university, is an ardent admirer of Burroughs's work, and knew him personally.

In the last six years of his life, book after book from Burroughs's pen appeared. Mrs. Burroughs died while he was cruising in the southern seas (Gulf of Mexico), in 1916-17, with Henry Ford. His birthday fêtes, embellished with candied cakes and maple-taffy pullings, came every year after this, I believe.

In the Spring of 1918 he was given the honor of having his statue (by C. S. Pietro) unveiled in Toledo, he himself being present, and having flowers sentimentally cast at his feet by school children! A rotogravure of the scene is presented in the *New York Times*, April 29, 1918.

Burroughs was said to have been painted or sketched seventeen times by Orlando Rowland. One portrait, showing him in his doctor's robes, hangs in the library of Yale University, and one was owned by his friend, President Theodore Roosevelt. Mr. Rowland's portraits and sketches were shown at the Burroughs Memorial Meeting in New York City in the autumn of 1921.

During one of the two or three winters passed by Burroughs in Southern California he studied the trap-door spider, having advertised for information as to its habitat. They were close by him all the while; but the traps are almost impossible to be seen, even when before your very eyes. One has to be guided to them at first.

In California, he said, the bird he missed most was the crow, his glistening coat in the fields, his ebony form and hearty call in the sky. This is a healthy sentiment, tho crows are certainly often a great nuisance.

A posthumous volume, "The Last Harvest," shows not a particle of falling off from his best work, his highest, most vigorous thought. Rather does it surpass most of what precedes it, in sane and

logical content, in strong ozonized judgments on men and events. His arrows fly as straight to the mark as Robin Hood's at the Tournament of Ashby. No hedging or concealment now. (He never had any.) His end is approaching and, altho always a sturdy truth-teller, he seems to desire now to say with uncompromising sincerity all he feels to be true about man and his destiny. To a great extent the book deals with the sublime themes, as did his "Accepting the Universe."

X

PHILOSOPHER AND SCIENTIST

X

PHILOSOPHER AND SCIENTIST

BURROUGHS'S later books on philosophical and human topics are, like his Whitman volume, rather heavy. His homilies are often like little sermons for young folks. He is not always on his native heath here, and (altho his topics are of supreme interest) his readers feel that he is sometimes studying out his subject as he goes along, *à la* Ruskin in "Fors Clavigera." Nature-themes formed his best card, his *cheval de bataille*, and one feels as if an occasional flash of silence on philosophical and scientific themes would have been well for him. By nature he was *par excellence* an observer, and not especially original in his philosophy. Like Emerson, he was all eyeball. Altho conscious of his lack of academic tastes and training (I remember he once poured scorn on my ten years of Shakespeare textual studies), yet conscious also of possessing excellent reasoning powers, he wants to beat the big drum in science and philosophy. But too often his readers miss the subtle trailing-arbutus essence of his soul; the edelweiss of his lofty excursions is not a sufficient substitute with them. His sugar has now only a trace of the wild maple-sap. On philosophy and the sciences Bur-

roughs perhaps wrote too much. Every new book brought him in more money, and it was therefore impossible for him to resist publishing everything he wrote. He will some time have to be abridged and condensed.

Yet in his philosophical essays he exhibits fine intuitive power. He has the cosmic eye for the stars, for the earth spinning on her soft axle, and for the huge phenomena of geology. His creed can bear on its back the whole globed and rocky universe. He believed in God, *sous bénéfice d'inventaire*; thought the universe to be something more than a temporary arrangement of colors, a mere magic-lantern exhibit by the Great Power that toils in the gloom, the Showman of the Dark. He believed that at heart it has a tremendous secular moral trend. In these winter-evening papers he perhaps talks a little beyond his brains, tho in all his work you feel, as an old Irish neighbor of mine once put it, that after all, he was "the full o' the door of a man"; and as Snarley Bob would have said, "there's no denyin' as he was knowledgeable in birds and flowers." The indoor essays embody much current truth and popular thought, with the old familiar Burroughs stamp. His lovers like to know what he thinks on the grander themes, just because they are well assured the thought will be free from theological cant, and be honey-pure in quality. In one of his latest volumes (1915) he popularizes the transcendental physics and psychology of Bergson and others, bravely assaulting the

adamantine barriers of life, but with agnostic results, as shown especially in his final printed utterance, the last two pages of "The Last Harvest." His essays on these themes are strong and weighty, tho with little pretense of originality. It seems somewhat queer, at first, to see our forest-and-meadow guide with a surplice on. Yet he comes by right to moral subjects; for, as he says, his bias was at the very first for the ethical, and his first essays were both in the Johnsonian and the Emersonian style. We Americans all have a determination to the moral. If to humor, and power to tell a story well, you add a great practical achievement and incorruptible moral stamina, you have at least the raw materials that elicit hero-worship in America.

There is an unmistakable Chautauquan tone about some of this portion of his writings. But he is certainly a very entertaining and convincing lecturer. When John wanted to learn a new science, he procured a few volumes on it and then proceeded to get it up by teaching it to his readers. They all seem to be thinking it out together. I mean, we all do; and somehow we like the mental gymnastic very well. He is so kindly wise and tranquilly candid that we trust him to the utmost, and let him lead us where we would never let a belligerent controversialist conduct us. The first thing his readers know they wake up and find they have accepted absolutely agnostic principles. This shrewd ingratiating reasoner has captured them, bag and bag-

gage, has drawn them out of their old hole by the scruff of the neck.

Burroughs has vision, imagination, in a marked degree. He gives a stretch to one's mind as he contemplates the enormous geologic periods. Once in a while, however, as in his field-lore, he slips,—as when he asserts that man's mind has developed enormously "since the dawn of history." If he had said "since the Tertiary Period," when man had recently emerged from the animal state, it would have been nearer the truth. But the latest archeologic researches in Mesopotamia and Crete show that the mind of man has developed scarcely at all, in the essential things, since the dawn of history ten thousand years ago. The Babylonian libraries show a civilization almost exactly duplicating ours, except in certain sciences and the appliances of steam and electricity. The tablets of those libraries were made in the dawn of human history. Burroughs perhaps meant to say that man's mind has changed enormously since the dawn of human life.

He also obstreperously maintained against all comers that the mind of the non-human animals is radically different from that of man. But that theory of his won't wash. When one thinks how a jay-bird, or a dog, or an elephant, or a chimpanzee sometimes reasons, he can not subscribe to the Burroughs dictum. He once admitted that perhaps he had worked the instinct theory a little too hard. He certainly discussed it at great length, especially in

"Leaf and Tendril" and "The Summit of the Years."

Says Henry S. Salt in his pleasant little book on pet animals, "The Story of My Cousins":—

"Of all the fictions with which mankind has allowed itself to be fooled none is vainer than the belief that the 'instinct' of animals is absolutely different from the 'reason' of men, and that the lower races are dumb and soulless automata separated from the human by a deep and impassable gulf."

The genius of Burroughs is predominately practical; I mean non-artistic. He sees and appreciates the beautiful in nature and in poetry, but does not creatively live in it and react to it. He reveals his limitations by rashly stating that "as artist and creator of beautiful forms, man has had his day and is not going any higher in that direction." He had a blind spot in his eye for the plastic and the graphic arts.

And yet he is not purely and solely a dry-as-dust scientist by any means. As he says, he goes to nature chiefly for enjoyment. But no professional scientist does that. Burroughs was in truth just an ardent lover of the beautiful and the curious in nature.

The new wonder-world of the infinitely small, of radio-activity and change, the world of the fourth dimension underlying our normal world of matter, Burroughs writes of this with the same sense of wonder he had at the resurrection of the wheat from the dark-brown soil when he was a boy, the same

wonder that the development of a bird's song from a speck of protoplasm evoked in his mind. He is ever Burroughs the curious, the searcher, the wonderer, the adorer.

I image him as a kind of benignant hierophant sauntering through the many-colored temple of the world, and explaining to the throng of acolytes who attend him the writing on the walls,—naming the birds and the flowers, giving good cheer as to the origin and destiny of man and of the nature of things. He has for a lifetime been a dweller in this temple, the walls of which are the horizon's blue. He knows many of its secrets, and delights to tell them to his followers. All he asks of you is a pure heart and an open mind, the mind of a child.

If I am told that this is rather extravagant praise, I answer, Nay. He may not be a martyr to science, like the splendid old peasant Henri Fabre; but he nevertheless seems to me to have deserved well of the Republic, considering his achievement as a massive whole.

Altho John Burroughs, country-bred, knew little or nothing of the pictorial arts, yet he possessed something of richer value,—the soul of a poet. This being true, he had need of a poetic and spiritual philosophy of the universe. His friends and lovers may rejoice that he found it in the works of Bergson. The "Creative Evolution" of this thinker (which Burroughs did not seem to know is very similar, in base-idea, to Schopenhauer's "The World as Will and Representation") somehow, he says,

"joined on to his [Burroughs's] interest in bird and flower and tree." It was cozy and comforting to him to think of the Creative Energy, or Will, as lying back of all the phenomena of nature—the robin, the bluebird, the trailing arbutus, etc.—that he had been studying all his life. God seemed very friendly and human under such an aspect. He doubtless thought heaven could contain no sweeter sound than the call of the quail by the pasture-bars in the morning dew. It is all very well, but I fear there is decidedly too much anthropomorphism in this creative-energy philosophy of Bergson and Burroughs. Perhaps not.

As to Bergson, Burroughs confessed, ten years after his first readings of him, to a difficulty in approving or even understanding much in his writings ("Last Harvest," chap. ix). He says that at first he was so captivated by Bergson's style and the richness of his natural-history lore that he could not properly see the flaws in his subject-matter. But now he will criticize him a little. For instance, he demurs to his thesis that, to a certain extent, thought is independent of the brain. But his talk about the Frenchman is not very lucid or entertaining, and I will not inflict any more of it on the reader.

With all his splendid loyalty to science, Burroughs nevertheless never surrendered to a purely mechanistic conception of life or the theory of things. His divinity was the immanent Will operant in all things. A thousand times he hints at this

mysterious something that furnishes the initial push, or *Trieb*, in evolution. He was a keen Sherlock Holmes in his thinking. Any trifle was a clue. There is no person of our times who is a better reconciler and converter of the average man to the new religion, the philosophy of the twentieth century and of all future centuries. "He knew how to get his heterodoxy across without offense,"— a thing that not every one can do. In one of his latest works, "Accepting the Universe," he tells us that that book is one of "radical optimism," with the "central idea that the universe is good, and that it is our rare good fortune to form a part of it." Bravo, John! This is a sane and admirable attitude if you can take it at eighty years of age. Even the buoyant and optimistic Walt Whitman, in one of his old-age utterances, in a despondent moment, was forced to pronounce "nineteen-twentieths of life to be low and evil, crude and savage," "devilish and dark." Walt could recognize the apparent truth of this, as Emerson could not, and yet maintain his faith in the essential and basic goodness of things (give the world time enough), could recognize the steady melioration of things. I think this was also the belief of his disciple Burroughs; for in 1908 the latter writes ("Leaf and Tendril") that to man's moral sense "all or nearly all is wrong with the world," tho he did not think it imperative to give "a rounded catalogue complete" of all the items in his creed. Burroughs was a pretty strong and well man to the last, physically and mentally; whereas the Old

Gray Poet was a semi-invalid when he wrote the lines from which I have quoted.

Burroughs's optimism, his sense of the humorous, play like lambent flame over his pages. They are the best gift he received from the Genius of Life. His gaiety and humor are the very honey and condiment of his books.

And, really, his optimistic philosophy is so strongly based and buttressed, so superior to the shallow, irritating optimism of Emerson and others of the Transcendentalists of Boston, that one hesitates to question its truth. Yet, after all, we are compelled to think Burroughs's cheery faith is due largely to the pleasant circumstances in which his lot was cast. Suppose he had been a low-caste Hindoo or a Chinaman dying of starvation. Would this have seemed to him then to be the best possible of worlds, as he calls it? Or suppose he had been incarnated as the most underfed, overworked, poverty-struck draught-animal on earth—a Chinese jinrikisha coolie—what then? One recalls here a pregnant remark of Giovanni Papini: "*Vi dico che non c'è più sicuro segno d'un animo piccolo che l'esser contento di tutto*" ("I tell you, there is no surer sign of a small nature than being satisfied with everything"). But Burroughs was far from that.

Burroughs's later books, containing his scientific philosophy, are cogent in statement and of sinewy grasp of thought. His creed is that Nature, or the Creative Energy, is God, and that Man, as a part

of Nature, is therefore in a sense, God. But the moment we posit of the Infinite traits of the finite (man) we get into trouble. For instance, to us Nature is blind, ever experimentally groping in the dark and reaching her goal by the hit-or-miss method. Yet we are compelled to believe that man and the Creative Energy are organically united, are one and the same in substance. Incidentally "evil is indirectly the father of good." "I want no emasculate universe. I want the fiber and virility and pungency, and power and heat and drive which all that we call bad gives it," writes Burroughs. "The world was not made, it is everlastingly becoming." "The infinite baffles the mind. The sphere has no handle to take hold of." The problem of the universe is insoluble. "I have never," he says, "taken shelter in any form of ecclesiasticism. I have never tried to clothe myself in the delusive garments of a superstitious age. I have never pinned my faith to a man-made God, however venerable. I have inured my mind to the open air of the universe, to things as they are." How excellent this is!

Burroughs's creed of scientific pantheism is succinctly expressed in the following paragraphs ("Leaf and Tendril," pp. 273-274):

"I confess that from the course of life and the processes of nature one can not infer the existence of a Being such as our fathers worshiped—a kind of omnipresent man.

"We get instead the conception of an infinite power, not separable from the universe, but one with it, as the soul is one with the body, which finally expresses itself in man as

reason, as love, as awe, as beauty, as aspiration, as righteousness; in the brute world as instinct, cunning, ferocity, and other animal traits; in the material world as law, system, development, power. . . . Heaven lies all about us, all laws are celestial laws." [The good is slowly prevailing over the bad.]

All this is from a paper in "Leaf and Tendril" called "All's Right With the World," in which he admits that to our moral sentiments, our sense of goodness, mercy, justice, benevolence, humility, self-denial,—all those tender and restraining feelings that are called into action through our relations to our fellows,—all is not right with the world. All, or nearly all, is wrong.

The intellect finds the cosmos perfect; but the moral nature is not found in the objective world. It is the creation of man in his social relations. In the outward world is only brute, unfeeling law. But then, man and his moral nature are a part of the constitution of things, too. So there you are. The universe works out as a huge beneficent pantheism. But little man with his egotism gets a heavy blow when he attempts to think it all made for his sole benefit.

As to the personal immortality of man, he writes:

"The hypothetical other world has scarcely occupied me at all, and when it has, I have thought of it as a projection from this, a kind of Brocken shadow cast by our love of life on futurity. My whole being is so well, so exquisitely, attuned to this world that I have instinctively felt that it was for this world that I was made. . . . A better world I never wanted."

An idea of Burroughs's creed may be gathered from such statements as the following:—

"Religion is an emotion, an inspiration, a feeling of the infinite, and may have its root in any creed, or in no creed."

"All is right with the world if we extend our vision deep enough" ("Accepting the Universe").

"In trying to account for the beginning of things we have in our hands a rope with only one end."

"The universe is not run for profit, but apparently to satisfy the esthetic and creative feeling of the Eternal [a very anthropomorphic idea, that]."

"Each of us is an incarnation of the universal mind. [Which is only Emerson, stated in Emerson's own words.]"

He intimates that he got his optimism from Emerson. But it probably was based on deeper foundations,—his own buoyant natural disposition and his happy personal lot.

"If the world is any better for my having lived in it; it is because I have pointed the way to a sane and happy life on terms within reach of all, in my love and joyous acceptance of the works of Nature about me. I have not tried, as the phrase is, to lead my readers from Nature up to Nature's God, because I can not separate the one from the other" ("The Last Harvest," p. 234).

"Man is not only as good as God; some men are a good deal better." [By "God" he here means Nature, as the context shows; and Nature is a very mixed thing, full of evil as well as good.]

In a chapter styled, "The Faith of a Naturalist," in "Accepting the Universe," he says:—

"The nature-lover has a new creed every day, and new preachers and holy days all the week through. Every walk to the woods is a religious rite, every bath in the stream is a saving ordinance. Communion service is at all hours, and the bread and wine are from the heart and marrow of Mother Earth. . . . The beauty of natural religion is that it is now and here and everywhere. The crickets chirp it, the birds sing it, the breezes chant it, the thunder proclaims it, the streams murmur it, the unaffected man lives it. Its incense rises from the plowed fields, it is on the morning breeze, it is in the forest breath and in the spray of the wave. . . . It is not an insurance policy underwritten by a bishop or a priest; it is not even a faith; it is a love, an enthusiasm, a consecration to natural truth."

In "Field and Study" he says:—

"I look upon Nature not merely as the garment of God, but as his living integument. With a man-like God, the maker and ruler of the universe, and existing apart from it, I can do nothing. When I write about Nature and make much of her beauties and wonders, I am writing about God. . . . I am a part of it. I see my absolute dependence upon it."

In his philosophizing, Burroughs's life of nature-study stands him in good stead. He draws his illustrations chiefly from the fields and woods, the flowers and animal life that he knows.

There are many half-truths in his science pages, as in his nature writings, things one might question and refute. I come across these things continually, but it is not worth while ever to be haling him into court. To take one instance, however,—he states that "the swift turning of the planet under our feet

is not revealed to our senses as motion." On the contrary, any observer can see the turning of the earth at sunrise or sunset simply by watching the apparent rising or sinking of the sun or moon over the sharp edge of a hill or mountain, and interpreting it truly in terms of the earth turning under our feet, or with us upon it, and not being fooled by the apparent motion of the sun or moon. Burroughs also says we can't get "the rifle-bullet speed" of the motion of the orbs. Oh, yes, we can, if we happen to be in the path of the shadow of the moon, in an eclipse, as it rushes over a landscape of the earth. It is said by those who have seen it to be an awesome sight. For instance, Dr. Baumgardt, curator of the Clark Observatory, says that "if the observer is located on a high point of vantage during an eclipse of the sun, he may see the actual shadow of the moon approaching with frightful speed, like a tremendous wall of darkness rushing toward him, silent as doom, swift as imagination."

At the close of the last of Burroughs's books that appeared in his lifetime, he recurs again to his friend Walt Whitman. His literary career began with one essay on the bard and closed with another. Walt's encouragement started him as a book author, and Burroughs's *l'envoi* was perhaps a mark of his gratitude,—a "So long, Walt!" as he passed down and out.

XI

LITERARY CRITIC AND STYLIST



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AS a literary critic, while not profound, Burroughs shows not only immense industry and wide reading, but keen intuitions and sane, excellent judgment. He weighs rightly, *e.g.*, all the poets,—Shelley, Wordsworth, Poe, Emerson, Whitman, and estimates at its true slight value current magazine verse. I believe his papers on Emerson and Thoreau to be his best things in the line of criticism (tho in his last paper on Thoreau he often unintentionally misrepresented and misinterpreted him). Walt Whitman and his “Leaves of Grass” were something too big for Burroughs to handle. He bravely returns again and again to the study of his works, but somehow with results disappointing both to himself and to us. The critic of Whitman should be built on as large a model as Walt himself. Léon Bazalgette and Sarrazin are so built.

Burroughs had a strangely passionate admiration for that second-rate man, Matthew Arnold. Arnold’s classical and German culture, his lucidity of style, his clear thinking and clean expression, as Burroughs words it, his cool English temper, seemed in some subtle way to be food and drink to John. They seemed to furnish something that he

had missed by lack of university training. Few nowadays read Arnold. Did Burroughs back the wrong horse? Probably not, for him. He does not swallow Arnold whole, however. Says he got stuck half way in reading "Literature and Dogma." He speaks of Arnold's besetting sin of giving a quasi-scientific value to certain literary terms. Again, "In Arnold's criticism we are made free," he says, "only as a liberal Anglicanism makes free, which is not much."

Our naturalist's rather wide reading did not lead him south of the English Channel very often. He read in translation some of the chief Greek and Roman and German and Italian and French classics. That was about all.

As for the literary style of Burroughs, one may say in general that it has the simplicity and pleasantness of good conversation. It has continuity, but scarcely enough flexibility and complexity. He had the natural eloquence in telling a story which is a born gift with many Scotch and Irish. It is one secret of his popularity. His material is clothed in nervous vernacular,—short sentences, no extraneous ornament, no straining after effect, the page often enlivened by sub-humor; no paradoxes *à la* Thoreau, not a trace of Thoreau's grim austerity and asperity, his chilliness, no slang whatever. In short, his style has good negative virtues and some positive ones, such as keen penetration and strong understanding. White of Selborne's pages are as

solemn and matter-of-fact as a parliamentary report, while John Burroughs's are full of snap and color. The exclamatory form used so much by him—his "how" sentences—get quite wearisome, it is true; and this mannerism seemed to grow on him. It seems to show poverty of invention. He should have had at his elbow a friendly critic to recommend the use of the tomahawk on these *how-how's* and exclamatory *what's*.

But, in general his style is excellent. It has absolute clarity. I don't remember a single obscure or slovenly sentence in all his books. Thoreau's "Walden," is full of abominable obscurities, owing to his desire to be sententious and oracular. And he brags of its obscurity. "What little merit my style has," says Burroughs, in "Indoor Studies," "is the result of much study and discipline" (p 273). He said once that he owed little to Thoreau. But there is a marked resemblance between the styles of the two writers. Read a page of one of Burroughs's mature nature-books, and then one from Thoreau's essay on the wild, called "Walking": you can scarcely tell when you pass from one to the other by any change of style. Was Burroughs a little ungrateful to Thoreau? Or was he perhaps unconscious how much he had absorbed of his manner of speaking? It seems to me that his first essay, "Expression," has not anywhere nearly so much resemblance to Emerson as his mature essays have to the work of the author of "Walden," I mean in

the matter of sentence structure, the rhetorical cast.

Of course Burroughs's style was not born with him. No man's is. It took years to form. His first book ("Notes on Walt Whitman," 1867), written when he was thirty—all of it that was not supplied by Walt himself—shows little or no trace of his mature style. Nor is his second book, "Wake Robin," so very much better in this respect. In "Locusts and Wild Honey" (1879), published when he was forty, and in "Winter Sunshine" (1873), it seems to me his style is at its best.* I regard "Locusts and Wild Honey" as his most attractive work,—and that because, like all his work, it deals with interesting facts objectively, not as symbols or as furnishing ethical material. "I had rather," he says in an essay on Emerson, "see Phoebe building her mud nest than the preacher writing his sermon. I had rather see the big moth emerge from her cocoon—fresh and untouched as a coin that moment from the die—than the most fashionable 'coming-out' that society ever knew."

In "Winter Sunshine" appears the best essay on walking in our literature. Thoreau wrote what purported, by its title, to be an essay on walking, but is really a paper on the wild in nature. Burroughs contrasts the English and the Americans

*Burroughs got the title for the "Locusts" book from the letter of a friend, as he hints in the opening lines of the chapter "A Bed of Boughs." By "Locusts and Wild Honey" he metaphorically signifies "outdoor things." It is a comprehensive title, tho the chapter on wild honey is literal experience. In this book and in "Winter Sunshine" there is not a trace of *Weltschmerts*, not a line of melancholy.

as walkers, greatly of course to our disadvantage. He speaks with enthusiasm of the charming semi-privacy of the little rural English churches, and lashes the Americans for their horror of walking to church or anywhere else. "The English grandee is not confined to his carriage; but if the American aristocrat leaves his, he is ruined." He thinks it would be tantamount to a revival of religion if the American people would as a class walk to church.

For so voluminous a writer it is rather curious, by the way, and helps to classify Burroughs, that he has added to literature no single apophthegm, no pithy portable maxim universally quoted. Curious, because his style is distinctly crisp, concise, epigrammatic. But it never crystallizes into the gem, condenses into the attar of rose. I remember two or three pithy expressions, such as, "The place to observe nature is where you are"; and, "The older I grow, the more inclined I am to reduce my baggage"; and, "The devils are the hod-carriers that serve the Divine Mason"; and, "You must have the bird in your heart before you can find it in the bush." But, in general, his thoughts are not coins that pass from hand to hand. Whitman, Lincoln, Roosevelt, Wilson, Emerson, Thoreau have given men winged words that we delight to pass from mouth to mouth; Shakespeare thousands of them, Burns many a one, Tennyson many. But it must be admitted that there are first-class writers who have not done so.

Yet, if he has not discovered new phrases, he has

at least discovered the first nest of the mourning warbler, and written the first description of the flight song of the oven-bird.*

THE ELEMENT OF HUMOR IN BURROUGHS'S WRITINGS

Hamlin Garland, in his interesting sketch of Burroughs in the *Century Magazine*, September, 1921, says that Oom John "was never witty and seldom humorous in conversation." This is just a little bit strong, perhaps, as a generalization. As I remember my old friend Hamlin, he himself is totally devoid of humor in conversation, and I don't at the moment recall any expression of that choicest gift of the gods in his writings, tho I've only read two of his books proper. So I fancy his solemn earnestness of manner served to chill and extinguish any sparks of humor that conversation might have kindled in the mind of Burroughs. You can't let yourself go with these matter-of-fact people. One soon learns that, whereas some folks immediately draw out the humorous element in one, every time you meet them, others but serve as a wet blanket to it. Falstaff says, "I am not only witty in myself, but the cause that wit is in other men." But the converse is also true. Still I suppose Mr.

*So says Mr. G. Clyde Fisher, associate curator of the American Museum of Natural History, in New York City, in a bright and chatty and beautifully illustrated reminiscential article on Burroughs in *Natural History* (magazine), March-April, 1921. This paper has as frontispiece a reproduction in black and white of the Princess Lwoff's painted portrait of Burroughs.

Garland's observation is essentially true of Burroughs in conversation in his old age, when Garland knew him.

But Hamlin would undoubtedly be the last to deny that the chief charm of Burroughs, the nature writer, especially in his earlier works, lies in his delightful sympathetic humor, of the Chaucerian quality, unmixed with scorn or contempt. When, in reading literature, you are led again and again gaily and good-naturedly to laugh aloud, be sure there is the genuine article of humor in the pages. Thoreau stands this touchstone—not in "Walden," but in such a booklet as his "Cape Cod." It is a much-worn truism that genial sympathetic humor is the attar of roses or tip-top bloom of the human spirit. It first showed itself in Chaucer (in literature), and reached its acme in Cervantes. If the sage of Riverby lacks it so much the worse for him. But he does not; far from it.

Personally, Burroughs and I were always laughing, especially in the first years of our acquaintance, in the eighties, when he was in the prime of life. As to his writings, if you can show me a more deliciously humorous narrative than the latter half of "Our Rural Divinity," in the "Birds and Poets" volume, I should like to see it. To me it has the delightful flavor of Burns, Chaucer, and Howells rolled into one. His fun is always of the genial stamp with no bitter tang. His bees fed on sweet flowers. In "Our Rural Divinity" he describes his

experience with cows when he lived almost in the shadow of the Capitol at Washington.

The first milky mother of the herd was Chloe.

"‘One cask for you,’ said the clerk, referring to the steamer bill of lading.

"‘Then I hope it’s a cask of milk,’ I said, ‘I expected a cow.’

"‘One cask,’ it says here.’

"‘Well let’s see it. I’ll warrant it has horns and is tied by a rope.’ A cow it was, sure enough.

"She led me a lively step all the way home. She cut capers in front of the White House, and twice tried to wind me up in the rope as we passed the Treasury. . . .

"The next morning the coffee had met with a change of heart. . . . I had to go out twice with the lantern and survey my treasure before I went to bed.

"This was in the Arcadian age at the Capital, before the easy-going Southern ways had gone out. . . . It was the poor man’s golden age. Your cow, or your goat, or your pig, led a vagrant wandering life, and picked up a subsistence wherever they could. Your cow went forth in the morning and came home fraught with milk at night, and you never troubled yourself where she went or how far she roamed.

"Chloe took very naturally to this kind of life.

[She had some trouble in deciding which way she should go.]

"She seldom reached a conclusion till she had stretched forth her neck and blown a blast on her trumpet that awoke the echoes in the very lantern on the dome of the Capitol. . . .

"In an evil moment I resolved to part with her and try another. In an evil moment, I say, for from that time my luck in cattle left me. The goddess never forgave me the execution of that rash and cruel resolve.

"The day is indelibly stamped on my memory when I

exposed my Chloe for sale in the public market-place. . . . An old Irish woman came to the market also with her pets to sell, a sow and five pigs, and took up a position next me. We condoled with each other; we bewailed the fate of our darlings together; we berated in chorus the white-aproned, but blood-stained fraternity who prowled about us. When she went away for a moment I minded the pigs, and when I strolled about she minded my cow. How shy the innocent beast was of those carnal marketmen! How she would shrink away from them! . . . So long as I stood by her head she felt safe—deluded creature—and chewed the cud of sweet content; but the moment I left her she seemed filled with apprehension. . . .

“At last the money was counted out for her, and her rope surrendered to the hand of another. How that last look of alarum and incredulity, which I caught as I turned for a parting glance, went to my heart!”

His next venture was a lean and lank Virginia heifer that at first scorned all food but her native corn shucks. . . . “Being deprived of her calf, she transferred her affections to her master, and would fain have made a calf of him, lowing in the most piteous, and inconsolable manner when he was out of her sight.” She would have a spell of affectionate and terrible lowing in the middle of the night, when even a kick seemed to comfort her. The end of this poor creature was death from indigestion, she having eaten up all the meal in the barrel.

His third venture was not much more of a success:—

“This time I led to the altar a buffalo cow, as they call the ‘muley’ down South,—a large spotted creamy-skinned cow,

with a fine udder, that I persuaded a Jew drover to part with for ninety dollars. 'Pag like a dish rack [rag],' said he, pointing to her udder after she had been milked. 'You vill come pack and gif me the udder ten dollar' (for he had demanded an even hundred), he continued, 'after you have had her a gouple of days.' True, I felt like returning to him after 'a gouple of days,' but not to pay the other ten dollars. [For she proved to be long-sighted, or next door to totally blind. She seemed to be able to get home nights], stepping very high, tho she was not sure of the right house when she got to it, tho staring at it very hard."

One evening she failed to appear. Then began a search of days, far and near. Her master advertised. No news. At last he spied over a grassy knoll a few squares from home a rump that seemed familiar. It was Buffalo, but ruined as a milch cow. Her story thereafter was brief and touching.

The humor of Burroughs's writing is not that of the professional humorist, but is rather a radiation and sparkle of good cheer, felt between the lines and glimpsed in the genial soul of the writer. It gives to his thought its chief charm, and is the main source of his popularity—taken in connection with the fascinating character of his material and the originality of his treatment. But by its very nature it hardly admits of proof by citation of specimens. It is a kind of coruscation and lambent flame playing over his words, divined rather than seen, like the invisible rays at the two ends of the spectrum. You know it is there by the feeling it gives you.

The Latin races with difficulty understand this kind of humor: they only understand wit. That's one reason the French and Italians can never really appreciate Shakespeare. An Italian writer (F. Martini) thus defines satirically the humor of the English: "*quella dolente arguzia che gl'inglesi chiamano humor, la quale scaturita da intime melancolie, vela di sorrisi le lacrime*" ("that doleful wit which the English call humor, and which, having its source in deepest melancholy, veils tears with smiles"). All of which is, of course, an exaggerated statement of the truth. There are grades and varieties of English humor. That of Mark Twain and Artemus Ward are of a different brand from that of Charles Lamb or Burroughs. The Italian definition might, reduced in terms a little, fit very well the class of our humorists one might term secretly pessimistic, but applies not at all or only very slightly to English writers like Chaucer, Dickens, Walter Scott and Burroughs, whose humor springs essentially from a buoyant optimism, an inborn cheeriness.

XII
LAST DAYS

XII

LAST DAYS

JOHAN BURROUGHS died suddenly, March 29, 1921, on the cars, while passing through the little town of Kingsville, some sixty miles east of Cleveland, Ohio. He was returning from California to celebrate, by the usual home festival, his eighty-fourth birthday on April 3. The immediate cause of his death appears to have been an abscess over the heart.

A telegram had been despatched to have a doctor meet the train when the party reached Poughkeepsie, for his illness did not seem critical. But he became suddenly worse; and, a few minutes after having asked, "How far are we from home?" he ceased to breathe. His physician, Dr. Clara Barrus, his young granddaughter, Ursula Burroughs, and the Misses Elinor and Harriet Burroughs were with him.

During his last winter in California he lived in La Jolla (pronounced haw' yah), on the seashore near San Diego, and in the suburb of Pasadena called Sierra Madre, in a cottage he rented. In a letter to his son he said he was tired of California and never expected to return there. "I long," he wrote, "to see the snow again, and to feel a genuine cold and escape from this aguish chill." Altho

the San Diego region is much warmer than Pasadena, yet they have few arrangements for warming their houses, and the Burroughs party was there during the rainy season in January, I believe. He elsewhere said he was always ill when he went South. And yet he was ill if he stayed at home, and "dreaded the winters" of the north. If he had lived I feel pretty sure that, "when Aquarius saddened the inverted year with the tyrannous breathing of the north," on the arrival of the snow, that seemed, at the distance of California to have for him the charm it has for so many exiled Easterners in that State, he would have packed his grip for a warmer climate, to escape the grippe of this. For in his very last volume I see he says: "The snow is beautiful to many persons, but it is not so to me. It is the color of death. I could stand our northern winters very well if I could always see the face of the brown or ruddy earth."

As is well known, Burroughs was one of an annual camping party, made up of the three close friends, Thomas A. Edison, Henry Ford, and himself. Hudson Maxim and H. S. Firestone, the genial tire maker of Ohio, were also of the party, tho I believe they came later. The year of Burroughs's death it had been the intention to arrange everything for the greater comfort of the naturalist, owing to his increasing infirmities. Formerly, the party had slept in the open, under blankets; but in the summer of 1921, it had been designed to take along tents.



PHOTO BY COURTESY OF MR. FIRESTONE

MR. BURROUGHS WITH HIS FRIENDS HARVEY S. FIRESTONE AND THOMAS A. EDISON
Under the orchard trees at Woodchuck Lodge, Roxbury, N. Y., August 30, 1916

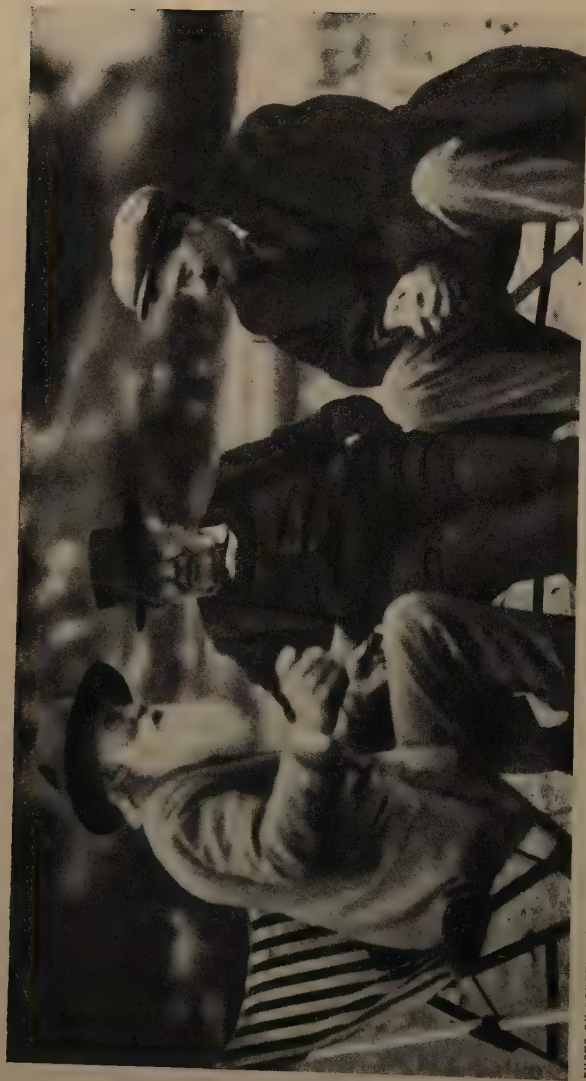


PHOTO BY COURTESY OF MR. FIRESTONE

"THE TRIUMVIRATE"

MR. BURROUGHS, THOMAS A. EDISON, AND HARVEY S. FIRESTONE

At Ausable River, N. Y., September 4, 1916

The year before this—namely, 1920—the party was held at Frank Seaman's Yama Farms estate at Napanoch in Ulster County. Here they were all boys together, and played various games and performed stunts.

One day, so the story goes, Mr. Ford challenged John Burroughs to a tree-climbing contest. The naturalist accepted, but picked out a shagbark hickory—a tree easy to climb because of its rough bark, making an easy foothold. The automobile manufacturer searched all around, but that was the only hickory to be found on the place, so he refused to play. Somebody suggested tree-chopping. Axes were procured and the contest was on. Edison acted as time-keeper, and Firestone as referee.

"All right, boys," said Burroughs, shedding his long woodchuck overcoat. He selected a white birch; his opponent, Ford, a scrub oak. Burroughs's birch fell in four minutes; "Ford's scrub oak not till several seconds later."

Then a banquet followed the game, Burroughs, to celebrate his victory, cooking a "brigand" steak, with onions and other "fixin's," over an outdoor fire.

But now all was over; and the group of friends gathered at the old farm to bury their comrade. He was laid where he had desired to be, beside a great rock in a sloping pasture east of the Roxbury house. It is sheltered by an ironwood-tree,

and near by wells forth a never-failing spring of water. "Here," said Burroughs to Dr. Barrus, "I climbed at sundown, when a boy, to rest from work and play, and to listen to the vesper sparrow sing. Here I hope to rest when my work and play are over—when the sun goes down."

The grave had been blasted out of the solid rock. The burial service "was simple—some prayers and recited poems," one of the latter written for the occasion, I believe, by Edwin Markham.

"When the coffin had been lowered into a bed of green hemlock branches and moss, and flowers covered the mound, the townsfolk and the visitors began wending their way back into the valley by twos and threes. The purple haze of dusk came down as a twilight mantle over the village, and then darkness fell, leaving John Burroughs at rest in the earth that he loved."

A year later, on his birthday, a group of friends and relatives assembled at the grave, now surrounded by a rustic fence, to dedicate a bronze memorial tablet imbedded in the rock. The tablet, the work of C. S. Paulo of New York, is a bas-relief copy of that sculptor's "Summit of the Years." It represents the naturalist as seated on the rock, one hand shading his eyes while he gazes into the distance. On the tablet are inscribed these two lines from his poem, "Waiting":

"I stand amid the eternal ways,
And what is mine shall know my face."

Among the flowers sent for the occasion were

junipers from Walt Whitman's tomb, and flowers grown beside the cottage in La Jolla, California.

In June, 1921, or earlier, a John Burroughs Memorial Association in New York made a rather unsuccessful attempt to raise money to purchase Riverby, Slabsides, and Woodchuck Lodge, and provide for their maintenance as a memorial. Henry Ford came to the rescue and the thing was carried through.

In his will Burroughs bequeathed his rustic writing-table at Woodchuck Lodge to Henry Ford. Julian was named as executor of his property, except that Dr. Clara Barrus was made literary executrix, and to her were bequeathed all royalties and income from his writings during her lifetime, doubtless as partial recompense for her labor in writing his biography and editing his letters, as well as for her faithful work as secretary and physician after the death of his wife. On the death of Dr. Barrus, the royalties go to his granddaughters. His library went to his grandchildren,—Elizabeth, Ursula, and John. The real estate went to Julian. An elder brother of J. B., named Eden, receives an annual payment of \$100. On the whole Burroughs may be said to have left his family "in good bread."

When thus, like Sophocles, "called by the voice of one unseen" the gentle friend of bird and flower and tree dreed the weird we all must dree, had I possessed the wand of Prospero or the scepter of Oberon I would have evoked such obsequies for

his funeral as the world has never seen. The mourning-dove, the wood-thrush, and the winter wren should have sung his requiem; the pines should have bowed their heads and the oaks cast their leaves upon the bier; the shy early flowers of wood and mead should have perfumed the air and strewn the way. And by virtue of the mystic powers of the wand, and of Ariel's help, I would have bidden the blithe lark, the pensive English red-breast, and the poet's nightingale to come, and bidden the sight-outrunning minister of the air bring hither the English flowers,—foxglove, wild hyacinth, and rathe cowslip,—and had the modest daisies throw hither their quaint-enameled eyes (for he was no narrow patriot-bigot, but held the motherland in as high honor as his own). And so, lying on an open bier, and marshaled by the birds and the pastoral bees, he should have been borne to the highest peak of his native mountains, that there a funeral pyre of fragrant wood might unite his mortal body with the pure elements from which he sprang and immersed in which he had written and worked. And there would the whisper of summer leaves and the clang of winter boughs have been his passing-bell for aye.

Withered long ere these pages see the light will be the flowers strewn above his quiet grave ("there he lies where he longed to be"), but not in our hearts shall his memory fade. Around his various haunts and homes his little friends of the feathered hand shall abate not one jot of the bravura of their

punctual song. Sweet be their strains, and light the whispering airs of heaven around that tender heart at rest at last! Fearlessly he scanned the record of life, nor accepted about the Universe any foolish priestly lie. From his hand we accept the torch and the hint. Once more let the pibroch sound. Forward, forward, after the Great Companions! In the quiet green lanes and underwoods we shall still find and be the guest of beauty and truth, and all the things genuinely worth while. Tho hearts be dust, hearts' love remains.

And so, dear Oom John, good-by. The wholesome influence of your thought and work is not only subtly mingled with our lives, but, like radio-waves, will tremble into far-off messages of good cheer when all of us, your contemporaries, shall be but dust and ashes.

XIII
FINAL ESTIMATE

XIII

FINAL ESTIMATE

JOHN BURROUGHS we should plainly call a peculiarly fortunate man, fortunate in his life and in his instantaneous death. "Life had made him broad gage, and had not denied him opportunity for development." In conversation with him one discovered that he had but one settled grievance—his wife's excessive neatness as a housekeeper. (The good woman's only passion seemed to consist in scrubbing and polishing. Her grand drawing-room, like that of *Ailie* in "Old Mortality," was apparently opened but once a year for use, tho perpetually cleaned and dusted.)

Deep in his soul he had one other regret—his wife's congenital inability to bear children. He told me this. He wanted half a dozen children, and would have accepted them as a gift of the gods.

Shall we say that a little more adversity in his later years might have been of benefit to this man, as in the case of old Polycrates? "Sweet are the uses of adversity." Clearly the Sage of the Hudson had too much incense burned under his nose by foolish women adorers, by camera men, and by publishers, and eminences of all sorts. But pshaw! it didn't hurt him much, after all. All that junket-

ing with the millionaire Frank Seaman (a fine fellow), at his 8,000-acre troutng place, Yama Farms, near Mohonk, as well as at Mr. Seaman's huge rambling Yama Farms Inn, where the invited, nominally paying, guests had only to rub the lamp of their desire to have almost any conceivable luxury spring forth,—from champagne to a moving-picture show or a barber-shop, and all free as air; all of those de luxe Ford-Edison-Firestone campings and jollifications in auto cars and yachts; and the free trips with Harriman and Roosevelt—what were they but the well-earned reward of the hard-working benefactor of his times, the toiling author?

As to his faults, we may well be a little blind to them, since they scarcely injured any one but himself, and that not deeply or vitally.*

The life and work of the man we have been considering present no deep psychological features that forbid a final estimate of his place in literature. He was essentially just a pleased child reporting what he saw around him, and widening

*Having praised him up to the nines, I shall be exonerated of injustice when I speak of a kind of overdone Burroughs hero-worship, a sort of Burroughs myth that has of late grown up. The ochlos has done its best to make a fool of its favorite and if his head was not turned by adulation it was not their fault. I also regret to say that complaints of his egotistic attitude toward his fellow-travelers, in his later years, have reached me. He was not careful to hide his faults, so that his warm heart got too little credit, perhaps. Let no one exaggerate his temperamental faults in an unkind spirit. Thoreau said if a man was sometimes cross and rough there was some hope of him. We may ponder that, but not adopt it as a life principle. We may not be big enough to do so with safety.

his range of observation in later years so as to include the knowable universe. He was an amateur in science, and an amateur in literary culture. He charms because he speaks the thought of the average man, domestic, timid, clinging to his own acres. He is far from being a lover of the wild alone, as are Enos Mills and John Muir. Of the real savage mountain wildery he knew no more than does the average farmer.

It might be thought that the fact that he negotiated once for a bit of land away off in a mountain valley of the Catskills reveals a hankering for the wilds. But closer investigation shows that this is not so. He tells us that the Catskill mountain-land was really more domestic than Slabsides. It lay in an ideally, idyllically, quiet and lovely spot, the opposite of savage. In fact, he says, Slabsides was originally a far more savage place than the dickered-for Catskill retreat.

If he builds a boat and makes a summer trip down the Pepacton, it is with the glee of the country boy. He would have been uncomfortable if caught far from the farmer's cow and the gudewife's pantry. His boat adventure is undertaken to get just a peep into the Robinson Crusoe, Huckleberry Finn life. We all share his feeling,—that is, all men and boys do,—and are happy when he gets out safe. So when he and his party of men and women go camping, and get the soaking that Nature seems gleefully to hold ever in reserve for her timid amateur lovers, we are as relieved as they when they give

up in disgust, and get back next morning to dry clothes and the normal life.

This domesticity, this intense Swiss-like attachment to locality and home, is a very marked feature of his character and his writings. It crops out everywhere. His love of his birthplace farm was a passion of irrepressible intensity. Not Thoreau loved the earth and the earth-odor more than he. Is he overwhelmed, crushed, as all are by the supernatural grandeur of the Grand Cañon of the Colorado, his mind finds refreshment and comfort in the discovery that the Cambrian plateau resembles the "brown meadows where we played football in the old days"; and the detritus reminded him of the old red sandstone soil in which he hoed corn as a boy. The overwhelming might of the Yosemite is at once made tolerable to him by seeing "a robin hopping about in the old familiar way." "Where a robin is at home," he cries, "there at home am I." This is a very ingratiating revelation of the dear man's soul.* The Yosemite, he continues, had superior attraction for him over the stupendous Grand Cañon by virtue of "its familiar domestic aspect," and he returns again fondly to the robin and the bluebird he saw there amid the grass and by the purling waters of the valley's floor. "The Yosemite," he exclaims, "is so tranquil, so sheltering, so beneficent." Think how forlorn and out of place a robin would seem in the Grand Cañon (he remarks), with no turf, and no trees for him to perch on!

*See in the Appendix a favorite poem of his on the robin's song.

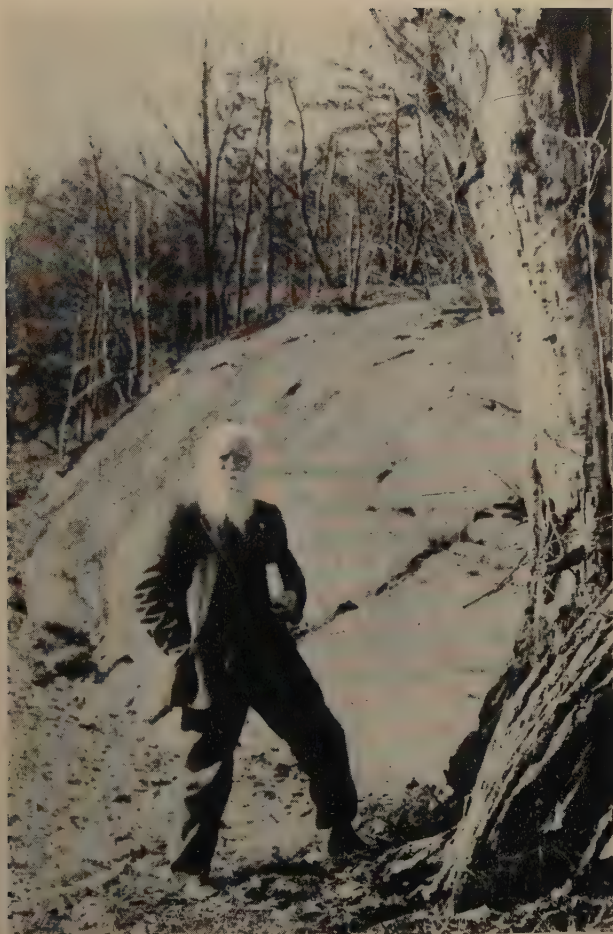


PHOTO FROM KEYSTONE VIEW COMPANY

JOHN BURROUGHS ON HIS 83RD BIRTHDAY



PHOTO FROM WIDE WORLD

JOHN BURROUGHS'S GRAVE AT ROXBURY, N. Y.

If he finds traces of charred wood in the prehuman Cretaceous rocks he is instantly pleased. It reminds him of the camp-fires of his native woods.

When he was in England, he says, he found its chief charm to lie in the domesticity of the well-combed landscape.

And, curious to note, he seems to like Bergson's spiritual philosophy of life because that thinker not merely pulled him out of the bog of dreary agnostic materialism in which science had ineluctably entangled him, but gave an intimate domestic touch to his philosophy. Why, he had all his life been botanizing and camping and walking with that same "Old Cause," without knowing it. It was one with his domestic Lares. That was the god for him.

In the English tongue there is no sweeter word than *home*, and it was the last word on the lips of John Burroughs.

In "The Last Harvest" volume, speaking of his local attachments, he tells us that when he was last in California—the year he died—he had a land surveyor make a map of the old boyhood farm in Roxbury, and had all his fields and groves sketched in and colored as he knew them in his youth. "I keep the map," he writes, "hung up in my room here in California, and when I want to go home I look at this map. I do not see the paper. I see fields and woods and stone walls and paths and roads and grazing cattle. In this field I used to help make hay. . . . In these maple-woods I helped make sugar in the spring; in these I killed my first ruffed grouse."

When he was in Hawaii and heard the skylarks and saw the white clover, he was thrilled. He cared nothing for the strange birds (nothing could show better that he was no mere scientist, but a prose poet). The white clover "gave a most welcome touch to the unfamiliar scenes."

In "Far and Near," he says, he built his little retreat, Slabsides, to get away from the publicity of the Riverby home, "to get a little warm, secluded nook that he could fill and warm" with his "domestic and home instincts and affections." (Nothing could show better than this statement the failure of Mrs. Burroughs as a wife, it seems to me.) He states that he was attracted to the site by its seclusion, the savageness, the elemental grandeur of it. But note that, like Thoreau at Walden Pond, he was only a little over a mile from the bread and pies of home. He says he could hear at Slabsides the crow of the barnyard fowl, as well as the yelp of the eagle. All this is very human, and endears him to all right-minded persons. Excursions into the wild are enough for any one, after all. No need to live there.

There is a sharp contrast between Burroughs and the Henry Thoreau, the John Muir, the John Van Dyke, and the Enos Mills type of man. Thoreau in the Maine woods with his Indian guide seems precisely in place. If it rains pitchforks we are pretty sure he will not get wet, even without his guide. Like Audubon he is the civilized wild man, while Burroughs, if cast away, would scarcely be able to exist without the ship's stores of Crusoe or of the

Swiss pastor, Robinson. Read Thoreau on the praise of the wild, and then turn to Burroughs and his Slabsides—why, the latter is to the former as a firefly's light to the light of the sun. It is hard to conceive of our Riverby John doing what John Muir of the Sierras habitually did—taking a bag of bread over his shoulders, and, with no weapons, no fire, and no blanket, making for the high mountains for a two or three week's jaunt. And as for imitating the feats of Enos Mills in the snow-fields and snow-whirls of the Rockies—well, John o' the Catskills would have begged to be excused, even when of Mills's age, as most of us would do; and he would tell us why in such a charming way as to convince us he was right and Muir and Mills to madness near allied.

One might run the parallel still more closely between Burroughs and Thoreau; for, altho he pretends that his head was not squared or timbered for learning, yet he certainly has darkened Thoreau's wreath perceptibly. The latter was born 2,000 years too early for his proper environment. Thoreau in "Walden," and Emerson in his address on Nature, and Walt Whitman in the "Song of Myself," struck the harp with such might that all the world turned to look. They leaped upon the stage like unsuspected lightning out of the cloud. Each of these utterances marked an epoch in our life and literature. But you have only to compare the significance of the Walden experiment with that of Slabsides to see that Burroughs's recurrence to Nature had no ethical motive

whatever, was no clarion call to a better manner of living, was not entered upon to show up society's humbuggeries; as was the Walden life and book, or to buttress up his pride and his poverty, to reduce life to its lowest terms, and find out its bottom worth, but was merely an expression of personal feeling undertaken to minister to his own constitutional love of seclusion and of nature. Burroughs was not a throw-back to the gypsy, like Thoreau. Nothing that he ever wrote caused the whole world to turn to look at him. In comparison with him Thoreau and Emerson were sensationalists, as much so at any rate as Rousseau or Tolstoy or Bernard Shaw. Be it so; and still we can not spare our Burroughs from the honor-roll of English literature. He is still Burroughs the only, as Thoreau is Thoreau the only. Tho Burroughs looked long and ardently at life through the lenses of Craigenputtoch, Grasmere, and Concord, yet he went finally and made his own lens.

The Hermit of Walden was like the giant cactus, an admirable thing if you want a drink, but you decidedly decline to throw your arms about it in gratitude. Burroughs's actually irritable overhaulings of Thoreau toward the end of his life were partly an attempt, it seems to me, to define his own position. Conscious of being much more deeply veined with humanity than Thoreau, and yet ever-lured by the intense white light of his ethical quality, and of his superior erudition. he wanted by differentiation to set himself off from him and place himself in his

own sphere, so all could see the fact. It was not that he loved Thoreau less, but that he loved Burroughs more. He wanted nothing but what was his due, but he wanted that. Perhaps he has written no chapter so classic, so weighted with gems of apophthegmatic thought, as the first section of "Walden" or the essay on Walking. But he has come pretty close to "Walden"—that rather frigid book, so closely resembling White's "Selborne" in parts tho more incredibly parochial even than that, and full of the tomfoolery of paradoxes. Thoreau never said a finer thing than did Burroughs in this:

"I hurry out doors when I hear the clarion of the wild gander; his comrade in my heart sends back the call."

Or in this on camp-fire drafts and currents:—

"It [the fire] carves itself a chimney out of the fluid and houseless air."

That sentence has in a nutshell the essence of Thoreau's beautiful poem on "Smoke," and for sheer original genius almost equals Emerson's matchless lines on the thrush,—

"Kind leaves of his covert
Your silence he sings."

(Can any one doubt, by the way, that these exquisite lines refer to the wood-thrush and his "musing melodious thoughts of twilight," to use Burroughs almost equally felicitous phrase, descriptive of the song of this bird?)

Neither Thoreau nor Burroughs were experimental scientists. I wish they had been, for they might have helped me out in a matter that has puzzled me not a little,—namely, why smoke is sometimes blue. As we have seen, each of our naturalists looks at smoke and writes pretty poetic sentiments about it. But if they ever noticed that it is sometimes blue and sometimes gray (and of course they must have done so), they neither of them, apparently, took the further step of inquiring why. I did. But all I have succeeded in doing, after many years of occasional meditation and observation on the subject, and exploring the archives of science and art, is to discover that absolutely no one before me seems to have published a single word on the matter except Leonardo da Vinci (in his treatise on Painting), and a writer in the New International Encyclopedia, whose words, quoted below, I have only recently seen. And all any one of us has found out is that the smoke of dry wood seen in front of a dark background is blue. If the wood is green,—that is, contains vapor,—the smoke is of course gray. But why it is blue neither Thoreau nor Burroughs nor Leonardo nor I has been smart enough to discover. We know *when* smoke is blue, but not *why* it is blue. It has nothing to do with the color of the sky, either; for smoke is blue when the sky is gray.

It may be that absorption and reflection of colors is the final explanation. The International Encyclopedia writer says: "The color of the blue sky, of

fine smoke, and of water in many lakes is due to the scattering of light by extremely small particles, generally minute solid particles; for the short (ether) waves,—that is, blue light,—are reflected by minute particles, while the other waves simply pass around them, or through them.” So Prof. Ogden N. Rood, in his “Modern Achromatics” (p. 55), says: “A thin column of smoke from burning wood reflects quite a proportion of blue light, while the sunlight that traverses it is tinted of a brownish yellow, or it may be even red, if the smoke is pretty dense.” That last remark of Professor Ogden’s reminds one that our sun is a yellow sun. Now you cut off those rays by an opaque body and the blue end of the spectrum appears, just as (a subtle artist friend* reminds me), a cloud appears blue or purple when seen between you and the sun, and for the same reason.

Nor does any one know why some flame is red and some is yellow. I defy you to find a scientist who has treated such a simple matter as this. They wear very big wigs, but scorn matters that a child like me may ask them.† It all goes to show how raw

*Harold C. Dunbar, of Boston.

†The resources of all the large Boston libraries as well as that of Harvard failed to give any light. And I even consulted living professors in the university. I have indicated in this book only a fraction of the research and original observation I have made on the subject. As for the color of fire in literature, the poets and prose writers of the world have for all time been calling it always red, following each other in this like sheep, whereas it is usually yellow. Emerson and Tennyson are the only poets I know who have it yellow; Tennyson, *e.g.*, speaking of the rich yellow wistaria-shaped blossom-bunches of the laburnum as “dropping-wells of fire.”

and undeveloped is human knowledge. It is well known to astronomers that the youngest suns in space are hottest. They are first blue, then, as they cool, they become yellow, then finally red. (See, e.g., George Ellery Hale's scholarly little manual "The New Heavens.") Why is this? Why this sequence of colors? The matter of blue smoke and red fire has emerged here incidentally and unintentionally in treating of the comparative merits of Burroughs and Thoreau. I leave it here hoping that perhaps it may stimulate some one to original research. For I am really chagrined that I can not find out the two pretty secrets. It lies somewhere between the nature of gases and the correct theory of the colors of the spectrum. Leonardo knew nothing about the spectrum, nor had he any correct theory of colors; nor do I believe that we have as yet.

I believe nothing ever impressed me so much with the limitations of Burroughs as his remark, recorded in one of his letters to me in this volume, about Joe Knowles, that splendid artist fellow in whose adventures in the wilds of Maine, one summer just before the great war, Boston, and all the rest of New England were intensely interested. Such a *tour de force* by way of assault on wild nature had not been deliberately engaged in for perhaps thousands of years. Imagine the eager curiosity with which

Of course we all know that copper burns blue and purple, and so forth, in a driftwood fire. All burning metals have their characteristic colors, of course. But even this topic is not treated by the ordinary chemistries and works on physics.

Thoreau would have followed the reports of the doings of that magnificent athlete as he plunged absolutely nude and tool-less and unarmed into the woods, struck fire from a whirled stick, sprang from ambush on a deer and (reluctantly) throttled it to get its hide for clothes, dug his bear-pit and trapped a bear for its skin, dammed a brook and caught the trout, gathered berries, and built his shelters of bark and evergreen boughs, fought off the megrims of solitude, and, after many weeks, emerged into society sound and well, tanned, clothed in skins (as I saw him in Boston) like Bacchus or Apollo, erect in an auto car, holding in one hand his bow and arrows, moving through the streets amid cheering thousands of his admirers to his hotel, later to appear on the lecture platform and to record in a book his proved and officially authenticated adventures.

Now the chief metropolitan dailies had pages and pages of pictures and narratives and affidavits all summer about this astounding exploit. It was the one thing best worth reading then. And yet Oom John wrote to me that he had never heard of it! After all, *que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?* He was probably engaged in studying up one of his pleasant themes of bird or quadruped life, as seen within the safe range of the farm, or of an excursion to the near-by hills or mountains. That was *his* distinctive task in life.

Without attempting the ungracious work of putting our favorite nature-writers into the scales and

carefully weighing them one against the other, it may yet be said in passing that Thoreau has had his "tail," but has produced no one like himself; Gilbert White has no guts, his veins are filled with frost; the English Jefferies, with a small output to his credit, has yet some little human interest. Muir, with his Michelangesque austerity, is grand for the mountain ranges, but is handicapped by his style, with its wearisome, because incessant, superlatives,—and he knows only the mountains. But on the brows of John Burroughs must be placed the wreath for wide popularity, and well-veined humanity, for broad discursive treatment of nearly all topics of human interest. How scrawny and thin are Vergil's "Georgics" and his "Eclogues" to Burroughs's rich and heavily loaded pages! He studied nature, and yet kept his head as a normal man. He was a *literatus*, and yet a good neighbor and a practical farmer and horticulturist.

In logic, in ratiocination, he was four-square to all the "airts that blow." Reasoning was his forte. He had, I believe, points of contact with Montaigne (for example, in his eager curiosity about all life, and in his well-hidden amativeness), without possessing Montaigne's bookish erudition. Nor was it insignificant that he was a passionate admirer of the poet-prophet Whitman. He was as virile as he. Both of them loved women, not in spooning troubadour style, but with true and chivalric respect and with the virile intensity that becomes a man. Burroughs's love of women was returned by them with

the unerring instinct they have for nobility in their admirers. In fact, as is well known, pure girls and women sought him rather than he them. As for his school-children admirers, it is a beautiful thing—only let not his publishers attempt to prettify and emasculate him. In short, I must put on record that, altho he had delicate feminine qualities, and his determination to the moral was most marked, he possessed, too, a burly bodily health that allied him to the coarser masculine half of the race in right degree.

His admirers, especially women, did their best to turn his head; still I believe he retained pretty well his sanity as to his ultimate position in literature. He looks in the picture, and probably felt, a little foolish when standing by in Toledo while his statue was unveiled, and watching the school-children file by to throw flowers at his feet. Few men could stand the amount of fulsome praise he received and retain their balance so well as he did. He was be-painted, be-posed, "camera'd" and "sculped," and in every other way advertised as no author else within my memory has been during his lifetime here in America. (One thinks with pleasure of the Duke of Wellington's, "Don't be a damned fool," to one of his flatterers.) But the reaction is bound to come (has probably come already). Time is the remorseless agent that, like Allan M'Aulay, violently thrusts every Dugald Dalgetty into his rightful seat at the table. That of Burroughs will be not far from the head, be sure.

He was a sturdy son of the soil, with a piercing eye for a fact, and thoroughly honest in his thinking. There were a few bats in his belfry, up-thrusts and cross-veins of the old original Adam in the strata of his character. Over these things I have endeavored to pass lightly, breathing his faults quaintly, as a friend should. Yet I have refused to flatter him. His features must not be softened into insipidity. The wrinkles and the warts are in the portrait and give it verisimilitude. Let them remain

My hand is off the door-handle.

THE END

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I

TWO FAVORITE POEMS OF JOHN BURROUGHS

MY READERS will perhaps thank me for printing here in accessible form the beautiful poem on the American Robin, by the lamented Connecticut poet, E. R. Sill, which was so much admired by Mr. Burroughs. For permission to reprint the robin poem, I am indebted to Houghton, Mifflin & Co. of Boston. Another favorite of his, "April Rain," by Robert Loveman, of Dalton, Ga. (B. speaks of it with high praise in "Field and Study," p. 223), I am also allowed to give here by courtesy of its author.

SPRING TWILIGHT

Singing in the rain, robin;
Rippling out so fast
All thy flute-like notes, as if
This singing were thy last!

After sundown, too, robin;
Tho the fields are dim,
And the trees grow dark and still,
Dripping from leaf and limb.

'T is heart-broken music—
That sweet, faltering strain,—
Like a mingled memory,
Half ecstasy, half pain.

Surely thus to sing, robin,
 Thou must have in sight
 Beautiful skies behind the shower,
 And dawn beyond the night.

Would thy faith were mine, robin!
 Then, tho night were long,
 All its silent hours should melt
 Their sorrow into song.

APRIL RAIN

It is not raining rain for me,
 It's raining daffodils;
 In every dimpled drop I see
 Wild flowers on the hills.

The clouds of gray engulf the day
 And overwhelm the town;
 It is not raining rain to me,
 It's raining roses down.

It is not raining rain to me,
 But fields of clover bloom,
 Where any buccaneering bee
 Can find a bed and room.

A health unto the happy,
 A fig for him who frets!
 It is not raining rain to me,
 It's raining violets.

APPENDIX II

BURROUGHS AS A YOUNG MAGAZINIST

I

AN ARTICLE IN THE *Atlantic Monthly* ON "EXPRESSION"

FOR A YOUNG fellow of twenty-three, a farmer's son, with only a country-school education, this first noteworthy appearance in print, in the *Atlantic* (November, 1860) is a very creditable piece of work. Rather sophomoric, to be sure, yet not wholly commonplace. He tells the story of its genesis in "An Egotistical Chapter." He was teaching school at Newburg at the time of its acceptance and was greatly encouraged by the magazine's endorsement. It seems that when a lad at Coopers-town Academy he had tried to read Emerson, and could make nothing of him. But the very next year, in Chicago, as I have elsewhere related, he found the key to the Emersonian garden. He steeped himself in his thought all one summer; and then, a year or two later, wrote "Expression" and sent it to the magazine. It was so Emersonian in tone that "the editor thought," says Burroughs, "that some one was trying to palm off on him an early essay of Emerson's which he had not seen. . . . It had not much merit. I remember this sentence, which may contain some truth aptly put: 'Dr. Johnson's periods

act like a lever of the third kind: the power applied always exceeds the weight raised.' ”

“So well had I imitated Emerson,” he says elsewhere, “that even *Poole's Index* put the essay down as one of Emerson's, and Dr. Hill, of the English department at Harvard, quoted from it in one of his lectures, giving credit to Emerson.

“The mark [musk?] of Emerson was on the garments of all of us young men who were writing at that time; and even now I sometimes get a whiff of it in my writings.”

Other sentences in the article have the Emersonian stamp:—

“Nature exists to the mind not as an absolute realization, but as a condition, as something constantly becoming. All things are made of one stuff . . . from the zoophyte up to man. . . . All form aspires toward the circle.

“The spiritual canopies the material as the sky canopies the earth, and is reached and expressed only by its aid.”

And here is a paragraph that indicates how early Burroughs was molding his style:

“Saxon words can not be used too plentifully. . . . A great principle anchored to a common word or a familiar illustration never loses its hold upon the mind; it is like seeing the laws of Astronomy in the swing of a pendulum, or the motion of the boy's ball,—or the law of the tides and the seasons appearing in the beating of the pulse, or in inspiring or expiring the breath. The near and the remote are head and tail of the same law.”

There is little hint here, however, of the picturesque and graphic diction of Burroughs's later writ-

ings, their gleaming crystals of words. When, however, he comes, five or six years later, to write of Walt Whitman he does somewhat better.

2

“WALT WHITMAN AND HIS DRUM-TAPS”

In my Whitman junk I find a few proof-sheets in paged galley form that were given me by Walt. They are from the New York *Galaxy*, December 1, 1866, and consist of Burroughs's well-known paper on Whitman entitled “Walt Whitman and His Drum-Taps.” The next year parts of the article were incorporated in John Burroughs's first book, the prettily printed little “Notes on Walt Whitman as Poet and Person.”* Of this *Galaxy* article, William Douglas O'Connor wrote that “it did much to dissipate the effect of the current abuse, then in full blast. Its quiet thoughtfulness must have told with candid readers.”

Here follows the fourth page of this *Galaxy* article:—

“But to return to our account of the poet himself. Contrary to the hasty opinions of the critics, who mistook the

*It consists of 108 pages in 16mo, issued first in 1867 by the American News Co., New York, and in 1871 reissued by J. S. Redfield, 140 Fulton St., New York. Internal evidence shows Whitman's hand very frequently (he wrote anonymously many of his own reviews in the early days). It was the first recognition of Walt in book form. O'Connor's famous pamphlet had appeared a year earlier. Burroughs's book was favorably reviewed by the *Times* and the *Tribune*. The Redfield edition contains 18 pp. of “Supplementary Notes.”

personal elements in his poems and their *unliterary* spirit (the spirit of nature and life is always unliterary) as evidence of the want of culture in their author, he is a man deeply learned in all the great literatures of the world. The Greek dramatists he has read as few moderns have, and knows Homer to his finger ends. The sects and commentators have not spoiled for him that greatest of books, the Bible, which he always has near. And his mastery of the German metaphysicians has not barred his mind to the enjoyment of the other extreme of literature—the stores of ballad poetry,—as the Spanish songs of the Cid and Walter Scott's "Border Minstrelsy," which last is a source of never-failing delight to him. Considering how the critics have fathered him on Emerson, it is valuable to know that he did not make the acquaintance of Emerson's mind till after the publication of the first edition of his poems. Going, as was his wont, to spend a long summer day by the seashore on Coney Island, in those years a place entirely uninhabited, he carried with him in the basket that contained his dinner, three volumes of Emerson's Essays which a friend had recommended to him. There, on that solitary beach fronting the sea, he that day for the first time read Emerson. [Extremely doubtful. See my "Reminiscences of Walt Whitman," London, 1896, pp. 79-84.—W. S. K.]

"But he has been a reader of men and things, and a student of America, much more than of books. Fond of cities, he has gone persistently into all their haunts and by-places, not as a modern missionary and reformer, but as a student and lover of men, finding beneath all forms of vice and degradation the same old delicious yearning creatures, after all.

"Lethargic during an interview, passive and receptive, an admirable listener, never in a hurry, with the air of one who has plenty of leisure, always in perfect repose, simple and direct in manners, a lover of plain common people, "meeter of savage and gentleman on equal terms," temperate, chaste, sweet-breathed, tender and affectionate, of copious friend-

ship, preferring always to meet as flesh and blood, and with a large, summery, motherly soul that shines in all his ways and looks, he is by no means the "rough" people have been so ready to believe. Fastidious as a high-class Brahmin in his food and personal neatness and cleanliness, well dressed, with a gray open throat, a deep sympathetic voice, a kind genial look, the impression he makes on you is that of the best blood and breeding. He reminds one of the first men—the beginners; has a primitive outdoor look—not so much from being in the open air as from the texture and quality of his make—a look as of the earth, the sea, or the mountains, and "is usually taken," says a late champion of his cause, "for some great mechanic or stevedore, or seaman, or grand laborer of one kind or another." His physiognomy presents very marked features—features of the true antique pattern, almost obsolete in modern faces—seen in the strong square bridge of his nose, his high arching brows, and the absence of all bulging in his forehead, a face approximating in type to the statued Greek. He does not mean intellect merely, but life; and one feels that he must arrive at his results rather by sympathy and absorption than by hard intellectual processes; by the effluence of power rather than by direct and total application of it. In keeping with this, his poems do not have the character of carefully elaborated specimens—of gems cut and polished by the intellect, but are warm and vascular, like living organisms."

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B BURROUGHS, J.
Kennedy, William Sloane,
1850-1929.
The real John Burroughs;
personal recollection and
friendly estimate,

DATE DUE		
DEC 03	1995	



